Commentary
September 1998

Bowing to Beijing
Arthur Waldron

Nerve Gas, Lies, and Videotape
Joshua Muravchik

Does Conservative Judaism Have a Future?
Clifford E. Librach

The War Against Testing
David W. Murray

Girl Trouble—A Story
David Gelernter

A Patriotic Left?
John Fonte

Gershwin at 100
Terry Teachout

Books in Review
Gabriel Schoenfeld • Elizabeth Powers • Daniel Pipes
Dan Himmelfarb • Patrick Glynn

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Commentary
September 1998

Letters from Readers

"Sexgate"

To the Editor:

I hesitate to disagree with Norman Podhoretz ["'Sexgate,' the Sisterhood, and Mr. Bumble," June]. On so many issues, and on so many previous occasions, he has been right. Whether he is right now in saying that the American people are not experiencing moral decline, we will know soon enough. I hope he is right!

William J. Bennett
Empower America
Washington, D.C.

To the Editor:

Having just read "'Sexgate,' the Sisterhood, and Mr. Bumble," I am a little disappointed. Norman Podhoretz is one of our most eloquent, lucid, and trenchant spokesmen for conservative values, and I do not disagree with anything substantive in the article. But it has some flaws. For one thing, the sketchy discussion of the movie *An Officer and a Gentleman* and the TV show *Ally McBeal*, instead of "provid[ing] us with revealing clue[s] to the complexity of the moral condition of the nation," as Mr. Podhoretz suggests, winds up trivializing the subject and adding a gossipy quality to his arguments.

My second point is that in his discussion of the "sisterhood," though Mr. Podhoretz, at least for the most part, avoids name-calling, emotion seems to run away with him. Understandable as this may be, it gives the article a breathless, angry, overexcited quality that tends to undermine its objectivity and credibility.

It sometimes seems as if Mr. Podhoretz is preaching to the choir and therefore does not feel the need to supply verifying material. At times his points lack the depth of background history or analysis they need to make them more convincing. These qualities are the very ones that usually separate Mr. Podhoretz from his contemporaries.

I do not have any argument with the truths Mr. Podhoretz tells, merely how they are told here. The article is otherwise excellent and badly needed. This country needs many more voices like Mr. Podhoretz's to achieve some semblance of balance. His latest piece is a just and necessary response to the unbelievable hypocrisy and intellectual and moral dishonesty masquerading as mainstream thought that are so common today on the radical Left. Someone must stand up and say that the emperor has no clothes, and I thank Norman Podhoretz for doing just that.

Paul Groben
Houston, Texas

To the Editor:

Rather than issues of sexism, the sexual proclivities of the President, or Mr. Bumble's concept of misguided laws, what seems once again at stake here is the abuse and misuse of power.

Men and women are not different from one another when it comes to the lust for power. They want what they want and are willing to do, and say, anything to get it. Women are far from innocent; they have used sex as a route to power forever. Those who were truly sharp brought leaders down through sex or used it to help transfer power to another man of their choice. Perhaps the most vital concept that feminists (pretty and plain) helped us understand is that we can now transfer power to ourselves.

Neither Anita Hill, nor Paula Jones, nor Kathleen Willey understood that one cannot get what one wants today by whining, complaining, or even pointing the finger of blame at issues that are clearly sexual.

What some people (e.g., Monica Lewinsky) want is simply to bask in power. Others want the ring of power for themselves. To do that they must knock someone off the power pedestal.

Bill Clinton's foes, un-

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able to challenge the President on anything he has done politically, have turned instead to sophomoric moralizing in the hope that the public will be outraged enough to bring him down. This is not working. His sexual behavior is simply not our business, and we know it.

Kenneth Starr would have us believe otherwise, and his personal vendetta against Clinton, at great public expense, seems to have led him to the misuse and abuse of his investigative authority—and all without evident result. When one individual can "do a McCarthy" with the law on his side, our rights as individuals are in serious jeopardy.

Perhaps Mr. Podhoretz's unchecked assumption of Clinton's guilt and his political disagreements with Clinton lead him to overlook this abuse-of-power issue, which would normally agitate the conscience of a conservative like him.

DIANA ROSEN
Sausalito, California

TO THE EDITOR:

Although I always enjoy the acuity and perception of Norman Podhoretz's articles and usually agree with them, I must take issue with "'Sexgate,' the Sisterhood, and Mr. Bumble." Surely Mr. Podhoretz must realize that the pursuit of power is the basis of the feminist movement. Specifically, it is pursuit of the power feminists perceive to be held by the leaders of the cultural status quo: the conservatives, so to speak. Thus feminists are far less likely to bash a quasi-liberal like Clinton than a political conservative.

One's cultural belief system is the primary source for providing meaning and value in life. Its debasement is a terrible blow to any individual or group because it strikes at the essence of one's existence. Isn't the fact that Clinton's persona is viewed as threatening to core conservative cultural values the true reason he is so vilified?

BRUCE PORTER
Venice, California

TO THE EDITOR:

As an Orthodox Jew and heir to a rabbinical Orthodox tradition on both sides of my family, I found Norman Podhoretz's article both welcome and unwelcome. First, let me thank him for all his brilliant articles on the perverse movements afflicting American society. My problem, however, is that in his arguments he has not brought to bear the powerful Jewish heritage, the Torah.

His detailed criticism of the women's movement is mostly on target, but why resort to noxious speech (even in quotation)? Why adopt feminist techniques in order to fight them? It really is not necessary. The fight Mr. Podhoretz is carrying out should be fought on a Jewish plane, not in the muck of those whom he resorts to quoting.

Torah Judaism makes clear that women, in spite of being subject to men, are spiritually superior. In Genesis, Sarah was on a higher prophetic level than Abraham. Proverbs instructs us to listen to the Torah of the mother, not the father. In Judaism, it is the mother, not the father, who determines whether the children are Jewish. Yet given all that, man is still the master. God is always spoken of, correctly, in a masculine sense.

Conservatism should emphasize moral values. I respectfully submit that Norman Podhoretz should use the unique perspective of the Jewish heritage to promote those values and attack the licentious perversity of American society.

MOSES MORDECAI TWERSKY
Providence, Rhode Island

TO THE EDITOR:

Norman Podhoretz's article is a comprehensive cri-

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tique of sexual harassment, but it contains two errors. The first is really the error of the judge Mr. Podhoretz quotes who, in dismissing Paula Jones's lawsuit, referred to a "purported expert with a Ph.D. in education and counseling." I received a master's in marriage, family, and child-counseling (MFCC) from a major university. The program was in the department of education. Later I obtained a Ph.D. in clinical psychology. Among the best therapists I have seen are MFCC's and social workers, who often have more empathy and involvement with their patients than either psychologists or psychiatrists.

The second error is Mr. Podhoretz's. He refers to sexual aversion, which Paula Jones claims to have developed as a result of her experience with Bill Clinton, as a "newly invented disease" and a "preposterous diagnosis." A century ago Freud described cases of sexual and other problems stemming from prior sexual abuse. Sexual-aversion disorder is listed in the current *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* of the American Psychiatric Association, the standard for psychological diagnoses, and was also listed in the previous edition. The problem is thus neither new, nor invented, nor preposterous.

Why should one be surprised if, in such an emotionally-charged area as sex, a traumatic experience causes aversion? In reality, childhood sexual abuse, rape, sexual battery (which Paula Jones claims to have suffered), and unhappy love affairs can each be followed by aversion to sex that can last years or a lifetime.

I was not in the hotel room, so I cannot say whether Paula Jones's accusations against Clinton are true. But I can say that the symptoms she reportedly describes are relatively common and can be caused by similar traumas.

STEFANIE AUERBACH STOLINSKY
Beverly Hills, California

TO THE EDITOR:

Many thanks to Norman Podhoretz for another blockbuster, long anticipated and most welcome. I think it is worthwhile to emphasize two points that seem to sustain Bill Clinton's apparently continuing popularity. The first is a combination of economic prosperity and political indifference. While Clinton may not be given much credit for the favorable economic numbers, no one wishes to rock the boat. A wealth of new business orders or a busy professional practice are powerful incentives to ignore the sexual shenanigans going on in the White House. It is not surprising, then, that Clinton maintains a certain degree of popularity among men.

The response of the "sisterhood" and of women in general should also come as no surprise. It is a question of sexual attractiveness. The President is naturally seductive. He is tall, reasonably good looking, has charm, charisma, and a shameless ability to lie with a straight face. These are winning qualities, especially in this age of television.

PAUL ROSENTHAL
Tarzana, California

TO THE EDITOR:

I agree completely with every aspect of Norman Podhoretz's "'Sexgate,' the Sisterhood, and Mr. Bumble." It is the best thing I have yet seen on the Clinton sex scandal.

While I appreciate its many fine points, I was particularly intrigued by Mr. Podhoretz's brief comments on pop culture developed in connection with *An Officer and a Gentleman* and *Ally McBeal*. I hope he will consider expanding his brief remarks on these matters into a full-length article. In so doing, he could contribute importantly to our understanding and even to our ability to influence the synthesis he sees taking place.

JONATHAN BURACK
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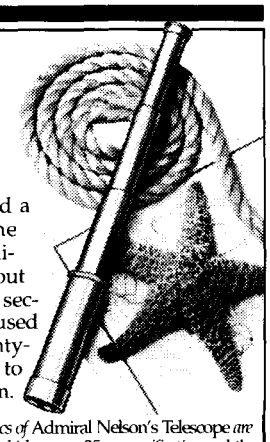

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TO THE EDITOR:

Hats off to Norman Podhoretz for his excellent "'Sexgate,' the Sisterhood, and Mr. Bumble." I myself have had trouble attempting to place a moral label on our nation as, on the one hand, I observe a religious revival sweeping the country while, on the other, I wince at the entertainment industry succumbing to presenting anything that sells.

Mr. Podhoretz's thesis that "there are two audiences, or even two nations, out there—one traditionalist and one liberationist" is right on the money. I, too, see a gradual, subtle turn to the Right, though I cannot provide an exact definition of the Right.

JOHN GLASS
Guadalajara, Mexico

TO THE EDITOR:

I have just finished reading Norman Podhoretz's brilliant article on the present state of sexual harassment in the United States. Mr. Podhoretz, you have done a noble deed. Congratulations.

WALTER J. SCHLOSS
New York City

NORMAN PODHORETZ writes:

Like William J. Bennett, I too hope I am right in arguing that the response to the Clinton sex scandals does not point to a general moral decline among the American people. For many years the American people were vilified for sinning against the values of the Left, and it disheartens me to see them now being hit from the other direction by some of my conservative friends (Mr. Bennett by no means being alone in this).

I regret having disappointed so friendly a reader of my work as Paul Groben, and perhaps I should have made an already rather long article even longer by being less "sketchy" in my account of what I think the popular culture tells us about the state of things out there. But I find myself a little puzzled by his complaint that I failed to supply "verifying material" or "background history and analysis" in the other sections of the piece. I thought I had done just that by going back to the beginning in my account of the issues involved and in quoting so many statements about them.

I agree with Diana Rosen and Bruce Porter about the importance of the "lust for power" in the feminist movement, but in my judgment there is much more to say about the sisterhood than that, and I tried to say some of it. Where I disagree with Diana Rosen entirely is in her attack on Kenneth Starr. As I have made clear on numerous occasions, I oppose the institution of the Independent Counsel, and I regret that the Democrats did not abolish it when they had the chance (now they regret it too). But whereas the Iran-*contra* counsel Lawrence Walsh, who (as we now know from one of his former assistants, Jeffrey Toobin, among other sources) truly did abuse his power by working not to get at the truth but to get various individuals, Kenneth Starr has been the soul of prosecutorial scrupulousness. He has been trying to determine whether Bill Clinton in effect was paid bribes when he was governor of Arkansas and if, as President, he then committed and/or suborned perjury. That this *is* our business should be apparent even to people who think that his sexual behavior isn't, though it seems to me very revealing that Diana Rosen, like the feminists I wrote about, is willing to give him a free pass here. Indeed, one feminist journalist declared that, in return for Clinton's support of abortion, she would be happy to do unto him what Monica Lewinsky evidently was in the habit of doing.

The reason I make much less use of Jewish sources than Moses Mordecai Twersky would like is that I usually address myself to an audience—both Jewish and non-Jewish—for whom such sources cut little or no ice, to put it mildly. But like Maimonides (*l'havdil* a thousand times over), I believe that secular reasoning is capable of arriving at many (not all) the truths and commandments of revelation (and only seven of those commandments, after all, apply to the "sons of Noah"). As for the "noxious speech" I quoted, I did so in this article (and also in some other pieces I have written) because there are instances (the writings of the Marquis de Sade or Erica Jong's remark about the President) when neither paraphrase nor description can convey the full impact or the character of the ideas under examination and attack. It is also important to show people by direct quotation that when I use a word like "pornographic," I am neither exaggerating nor being prissy.

Having had some acquaintance of my own, mostly via the printed page, with the type of therapist Stefanie Auerbach Stolinsky defends, I am not convinced by her anecdotal evidence that the judge in the Paula Jones case was wrong in speaking so dismissively about the credentials of the "expert witness" who testified about "sexual aversion." Nor would I any longer trust what the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* of the American Psychiatric Association says about this or anything else—not after the way the APA allowed political pressures (and politically-correct ideas) to turn itself upside down on the issue of homosexuality. As for "sexual aversion" itself, Stephanie Stolinsky (or rather, Freud) may well have a point when it comes to the sexual abuse of small children. But Paula Jones was no child when she walked into Bill Clinton's hotel suite that day, and so far as I am aware, no evidence was presented to show that anything that may have happened to her there damaged her sex life thereafter. It certainly did not prevent her from getting married.

It goes without saying, finally, that I thank Paul Rosenthal, Jonathan Burack, John Glass, and Walter J. Schloss for their generous words.

The International Criminal Court

TO THE EDITOR:

In "Against an International Criminal Court" [May], Lee A. Casey and David B. Rivkin, Jr. present thoughtful grounds for doubting whether the United States should adhere to a proposed treaty to establish such a court. They argue that we should not enter into international obligations with which we do not intend to comply fully and that, if the UN-sponsored

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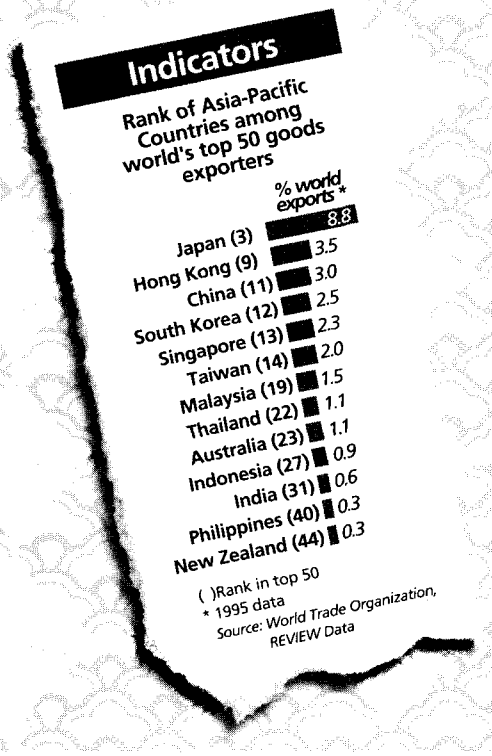

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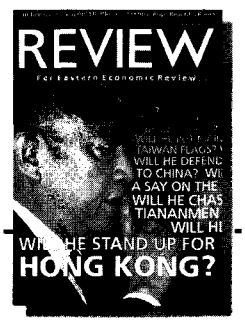

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treaty to establish an International Criminal Court would put us in a situation of having to defy the treaty obligation in our national interest, then we should not enter into the treaty in the first place.

This kind of conflict is particularly likely to occur in the criminal area, as shown by Virginia's recent execution of a Paraguayan national, despite a remarkable order by the International Court of Justice to stay the execution. Such episodes weaken the ability of the United States to rely upon international law.

Unfortunately, however, Messrs. Casey and Rivkin support their opposition with an almost absurd constitutional argument. Of course *American* tribunals are subject to the protections of our Constitution, and under our Constitution these protections cannot be impaired by treaty. But this does not mean that a foreign tribunal may not try an American.

Let us say that an American in the United States sends a letter bomb to France, killing the intended victim there. There is patently no constitutional difficulty with a proper extradition of the criminal to France for trial in France. This is so despite the lack of a jury trial and other U.S. constitutional protections in the French criminal system, not to mention the lack of judges in France who are appointed by a U.S. President.

Clearly, an American can be tried by a foreign court. The Supreme Court in the well-known 1913 case of *Charlton* v. *Kelly* upheld the extradition of an American citizen to be tried in Italy for murder. While that murder occurred in Italy, there is no constitutional basis for distinguishing that case from the letter-bomb example, where the victim suffers the intended injury in the foreign state.

The Constitution clearly permits treaties requiring the United States to hand up its citizens for trial abroad by foreign courts. Whether the United States should enter into the treaty for the International Criminal Court is—as Messrs. Casey and Rivkin point out—another matter.

JOHN M. ROGERS
College of Law
University of Kentucky
Lexington, Kentucky

TO THE EDITOR:

Lee A. Casey and David B. Rivkin, Jr. claim that the proposed International Criminal Court "will not, and cannot, work as advertised."

The first argument they present is that the U.S. government cannot delegate its judicial authority

> to put Americans on trial for offenses (like planning an allegedly illegal military action) that they have committed on American soil to an institution that is not a court of the United States.

I believe another word for such an offense is aggression, and the Pentagon does not have to worry. Even if the crime of aggression were included in the mandate of the International Criminal Court, as it was after World War II at Nuremberg, only the United Nations Security Council can declare a military action by a state to be aggression, and the U.S. has a veto over Security Council decisions.

The authors' second argument is that the proposed court would be unconstitutional because it would "fail to provide American defendants the basic guarantees they enjoy under the Constitution's Bill of Rights," as decided by cases before the Supreme Court. In fact, the cases that the authors cite are from the Civil War era, the 1890's, and World War II. They ignore developments in the law over the last 50 years. The U.S. Constitution specifically provides that treaties are the supreme law of the land, and it is the prevailing opinion of current legal authorities that this constitutional provision should be respected. Furthermore, the statute of the proposed court will incorporate the legal standards of the major legal systems of the world, including that of the United States, to be sure that every defendant has a fair trial. And if the United States government were to investigate in a fair way and either find insufficient evidence for a trial or itself try an American accused of war crimes, the international court would have no jurisdiction.

The authors' third argument is that even if the proposed international court were constitutional, it should not be created to sit in judgment over despots and mass murderers because the U.S. and its allies would also fall under its jurisdiction and the court is likely to be politicized like other United Nations organs. But UN organs are by their very nature political bodies; the court would not be. Its officers would be chosen for their legal knowledge and integrity, and they would be subject to supervision, public scrutiny, budgetary control, and impeachment.

The best precedent we have is the War Crimes Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, on which the authors heap praise. It has been operating now for about four years. Its prosecutors, including Judge Richard Goldstone of South Africa, have acted beyond reproach. And the Tribunal has investigated and tried indicted war criminals with a growing degree of success. In the last year, the number of indicted war criminals in its custody has grown from seven to 26.

The fourth argument is that a U.S. decision to attack Saddam Hussein would leave the President and those exercising authority under his command vulnerable to investigation and prosecution. But as the authors admit in their next paragraph, "a scenario like this one . . . seems unlikely."

In short, Messrs. Casey and Rivkin fail to make a case that the proposed court "will not, and cannot, work." Following their advice would just make it easier for tyrants who commit war crimes and genocide to escape justice. And it would end the opportunity now offered to codify in international law the imperative of redress for victims of war crimes and genocide, including rehabilitation, restitution, or reparations.

HARRIS O. SCHOENBERG
Coordinating Board of Jewish Organizations
New York City

LEE A. CASEY and DAVID B. RIVKIN, JR. write:

Most of the points made in these letters have been rendered moot as a result of what happened at the UN Conference on the International Criminal Court held

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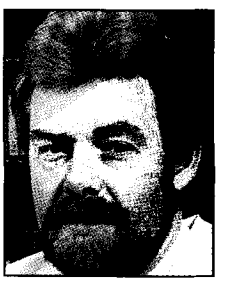

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in Rome from June 15 to July 17. The final document that came out of that conference was so much worse than the advance proposals for the ICC on which we based our article that we would like to bring readers up to date.

Not only were all the fears expressed in our essay confirmed at the Rome conference, but the extreme nature of the final treaty alarmed even the Clinton administration, which had enthusiastically—and blindly—supported the creation of a permanent ICC. The modest mechanisms by which the U.S. sought to make the Court accountable to some institution other than itself—such as a requirement that matters be referred to it for investigation and prosecution by the UN Security Council—were resoundingly, indeed vengefully, rejected.

What became apparent at the conference was that the delegates, from more than 125 countries, seemed more interested in setting up a supranational organization capable of reining in American power than in creating an institution aimed at bringing international outlaws to justice. The final tally—with only seven other countries joining the U.S. in voting against the treaty—only confirmed this impression.

In our article, we pointed out that the ICC, as a law unto itself, entirely unaccountable for its actions to any other authority, could be used as a political tool against the United States and its allies. We also feared that the ICC, once established, would quickly become the world's policeman—as well as its prosecutor, judge, jury, and jailer. Proof that our fears were well-grounded is to be found in the final document of the Rome conference. But what we did not anticipate was that, in violation of the accepted rules of international law, that document would include an unprecedented provision claiming jurisdiction for the ICC over states that have *not* signed and ratified the treaty.

What we now have is, in fact, an international Independent Counsel, capable of initiating prosecutions against American citizens. Moreover, the areas within the ICC's jurisdiction—war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, and aggression—are either so broadly defined as to cover acts never before considered violations of international law or, even more disturbing, not defined at all. The crime of "aggression," for example, is to be defined by the states that eventually join the treaty—and in any manner they choose. No finding by the Security Council that aggression has taken place, as suggested by our correspondent Harris O. Schoenberg (whom events have proved wrong on almost every point), is required.

In effect, the treaty subjects the leadership of any state that uses military force—whether acting in accordance with the provisions of the UN Charter, customary international law, or domestic law—to the review and judgment of the ICC prosecutor and judges. The argument of Mr. Schoenberg and other ICC supporters—namely, that the Court's jurisdiction should not extend to American citizens who had been fairly investigated by the U.S. government—did not prevail at Rome. Under Article 17 of the final document, the ICC can pursue a case where the national government concerned "is unwilling or unable genuinely to carry out the investigation or prosecution." It is entirely up to the ICC to determine whether a state has been "unwilling" to pursue a case, and specifically whether its proceedings have been conducted "independently or impartially."

Under our system of government, even assuming the most impartial and judicious ICC, any decision not to prosecute is likely to fall short of this standard. With one narrow exception, decisions on whether to prosecute a crime on the federal level are made by executive-branch officials directly accountable to the President. But the individuals most likely to be accused of violations within the ICC's jurisdiction—the military and civilian officials of the Defense Department—are themselves members of the executive branch, and hence also directly accountable to the President. There is here the appearance of a conflict of interest that could easily be taken by an ICC prosecutor as grounds for moving forward in any case the United States has declined to prosecute.

Nor, contrary to John M. Rogers's understanding, would such cases necessarily be confined to crimes Americans are charged with having committed abroad. The Supreme Court has indeed long held (see *Neely* v. *Henkel*, 1901) that the Constitution's protections "have no relation to crimes committed *without* the jurisdiction of the United States against the laws of a foreign country" (emphasis added). But U.S. participation in the ICC would subject Americans to the ICC's authority for crimes committed *in* the United States and *within* the jurisdiction of our courts—including crimes committed by Americans against other Americans. Therein lies the constitutional issue we raised in our article.

As all this suggests, Mr. Schoenberg's confidence that the ICC, unlike other UN organizations, would not be "political" was betrayed at the very hour of its birth. And the politics of the court is aimed not only against the United States but against its allies. The most striking illustration is a provision, sponsored by Egypt and Syria and supported by the other Arab states, declaring as a "war crime"

> [t]he transfer, directly or indirectly, by the Occupying Power of parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies, or the deportation or transfer of all or parts of the population of the occupied territory within or outside this territory.

That this wholly novel provision is aimed solely and specifically at Israel was well understood by all. In the words of the Secretary General of the Arab League, Esmat Abdel Meguid, the resolution creating the ICC "regards Israeli settlements in occupied lands as a war crime," for which Israeli leaders can be subject to prosecution.

Originally we believed that the U.S. could avoid the dangers we foresaw in the ICC simply by refusing to sign and ratify the treaty. In light of the provision that citizens of non-signatory states will also be subject to pros-

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ecution, this is no longer sufficient. Already the Clinton administration has indicated that, because of what happened at Rome, it will need to reassess American troop deployments abroad, and that the treaties governing the status of our troops in ICC countries (including the other members of NATO) will have to be renegotiated to ensure that Americans are not illegally seized and delivered to the court.

But even this step will not guarantee the safety of American nationals from illegal prosecution by the ICC. The only certain way to prevent that is to prevent the treaty itself from coming into force, which it will do upon being ratified by a minimum of 60 nations. If we do not succeed in stopping the ICC now, we will find, to borrow Thomas Jefferson's words regarding another indefensible institution, that we "have the wolf by the ears; and we can neither hold him, nor safely let him go."

Immigration and Multiculturalism

TO THE EDITOR:

Linda Chavez's assertion that "both recent immigrants and America itself would have much to gain if fewer Latinos were admitted" would seem to represent a welcome and long overdue shift in her thinking on the subject of immigration ["Our Hispanic Predicament," June]. However, Miss Chavez's article is rendered less than fully persuasive by her astonishing failure to explain—or even to mention—her former opposition to the views she is now espousing.

Take the question of assimilation. When I remarked in *National Review* four years ago that the way to lessen the Hispanic separatism that Miss Chavez disliked was to reduce the mass Hispanic immigration that she supported, Miss Chavez in a letter to the editor (May 2, 1994) called me an "expert complainer" and insisted that Mexican immigrants are rapidly assimilating. "Immigrants themselves desperately want to become Americans," she concluded. "How ironic that Mr. Auster lines up with the multiculturalists and tells them that they just won't fit in." Yet now she writes that large-scale immigration from Mexico "is unquestionably a factor inhibiting the successful assimilation of Mexicans already here." In other words, Miss Chavez is now conceding a point that she and other pro-immigration conservatives have resisted for many years: that third-world immigration itself, not just government-sponsored multiculturalism, is a major cause of cultural balkanization in the U.S.

In support of this idea, she cites low rates of naturalization and English acquisition among Hispanics and recounts the shocking anti-American riot by 90,000 Hispanic soccer fans at the Gold Cup match in Los Angeles this past February. But these and similar indicators of Hispanic non-assimilation have been manifest for years. Why did Miss Chavez not draw the same conclusion from them earlier? In "What to Do About Immigration" [COMMENTARY, March 1995], she herself referred to a march by 70,000 mostly Hispanic demonstrators through downtown Los Angeles in which they denounced proposed cut-offs in public assistance for illegal aliens while waving Mexican flags and shouting "*Viva la Raza.*" Yet this event, shocking as it was to many Americans at the time, did not lead Miss Chavez to question the will and ability of Hispanics to adopt American cultural identity. Instead, she dismissed such concerns. "[N]early half of all Hispanics consider themselves white," she wrote, and "by defining themselves as white, Hispanics are identifying with the majority." Any failure of Hispanics to assimilate, she opined, was exclusively *America's* fault: "[I]f we . . . cease to believe that being an American has any worth or meaning, we

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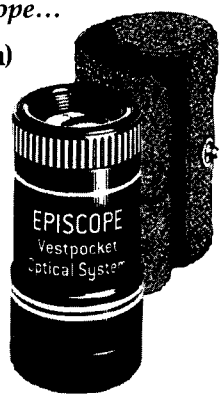

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should not blame immigrants, most of whom entertain no such doubts."

Miss Chavez has also used scare tactics aimed at silencing immigration reformers. Writing in the November 18, 1996 *New York Times*, she argued that Republican support for limiting welfare benefits to legal immigrants and denying welfare benefits to illegal aliens (measures that Miss Chavez herself had suggested in her March 1995 COMMENTARY article) had convinced Hispanic voters that the GOP is "anti-immigrant." And she advised Republican congressional leaders "to resist those who want to continue the fight to cut back legal immigration."

Given the above record, an intellectual accounting by Miss Chavez would seem to be in order. If the convert on the road to Damascus is to have any credibility in her future pronouncements on this issue (and I hope she will), then she needs to admit that she is in fact a convert, take responsibility for her past attacks on views and people she now seems to be agreeing with, and explain what has made her change her mind—if indeed she has changed her mind. The problem is not merely academic. In the absence of a principled retraction of her earlier statements, how can Miss Chavez expect Republicans to commit themselves to the restrictionist policy that she now says she favors, but that—just two years ago—she characterized as morally wrong and politically suicidal?

LAWRENCE AUSTER
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

Linda Chavez claims that there is a "complete absence of empirical evidence that [bilingual education] does any good at all." This is not what the published research says. Those who have reviewed the research on the effectiveness of bilingual education can be divided into three groups: (1) those who have concluded that children in properly organized bilingual programs impressively and consistently outperform those in English-only programs on tests of English-language development (the group of which I am a member); (2) those who have concluded that bilingual programs provide a slight advantage over all-English alternatives; and (3) those who have concluded that "structured immersion" is more effective than bilingual education.

While there is still controversy, there is also considerable empirical evidence showing that bilingual education is effective in helping children develop English literacy.

Miss Chavez claims that Hispanic parents are not enthusiastic about bilingual education. But Hispanics voted against California's Proposition 227 by a two-to-one margin, and most polls show that they support bilingual education (see my review-paper in the *Bilingual Research Journal*, 1996). A poll that does not show this is the one conducted by Miss Chavez's group, the Center for Equal Opportunity, which asked the following question:

> In your opinion, should children of Hispanic background, living in the United States, be taught to read and write Spanish before they are taught English, or should they be taught English as soon as possible?

This question presupposes that learning to read and write in Spanish will not help children learn to read and write in English "as soon as possible." But learning to read in the first language is a short-cut to second-language reading because it is easier to learn to read in a language you already understand, and literacy transfers rapidly across languages.

Finally, Miss Chavez claims that "As of 1990, three-quarters of Mexican immigrants who arrived in the 1980's still spoke little or no English." In 1990, I examined data on the English-language ability of immigrants from Mexico who arrived in the U.S. between 1980 and 1990 and who said they spoke a language other than English. Among those who became U.S. citizens, 53 percent said they spoke English "very well" or "well." Among those who did not become U.S. citizens, 37 percent spoke English "very well" or "well." For children ages five to seventeen, the respective figures were 75 percent and 58 percent.

STEPHEN KRASHEN
University of Southern California
Los Angeles, California

LINDA CHAVEZ writes:

I suppose I should count it a testament to the level-headedness of my own position to count among my critics those at both extremes of the debate over immigration and multiculturalism—Lawrence Auster and Stephen Krashen.

Despite Mr. Auster's gloating eagerness to welcome me into the restrictionist camp, I remain an enthusiastic supporter of continued high levels of immigration to the United States. My support has never been unconditional, however. As I made clear in my March 1995 COMMENTARY article, "What to Do About Immigration," I believe that the United States would be better off admitting fewer low-skilled immigrants, whatever their race or ethnic group, because they offer fewer economic benefits to the U.S. and are also likely to have a more difficult time assimilating. And I have consistently supported giving preference to immigrants who already know English, regardless of where they come from. But I have also warned in the past that because their homeland is so close and the number of their co-ethnics in this country so great, Mexican immigrants pose a greater challenge in terms of assimilation than other ethnic groups. Nonetheless, Mr. Auster is correct to point out that my anxiety on this account is growing. In this connection, the Mexican government's recent action to encourage dual-nationality status for naturalized American citizens of Mexican origin as well as U.S.-born Americans of Mexican ancestry is indeed troubling.

For years I have cautioned that the policy of providing government services in Spanish as well as in English threatens the cultural assimilation of Hispanic immigrants, even as other factors—such as a strong work ethic, upward mobility, and a healthy family life—ensure that Hispanics are unlikely to become a permanent underclass. I was not surprised, however, by Mr. Krashen's defense of bilingual education, coming as it does from the foremost proponent of the theory that children can-

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not learn to read and write properly in a second language until they become proficient at those tasks in their first language.

Mr. Krashen favors programs aimed at teaching youngsters in their native language for three to six years, or more. Unfortunately for him, and in spite of his assertion to the contrary, there is almost no empirical evidence that this method works. For example, Christine Rossell of Boston University examined every study of bilingual education that meets minimal standards of validation and concluded that only 7 percent of them show bilingual education to be better than doing *nothing at all* for children who do not know English, while 64 percent show bilingual education to be *worse* than doing nothing. And none of the studies examined by Rossell shows bilingual programs to be better than either English-as-a-second-language or English-immersion programs.

In closing, let me cite from a brief prepared by Keith Baker for the Center for Equal Opportunity in support of a court challenge to Proposition 227, the California ballot initiative banning bilingual education. Baker, a social scientist who oversaw the government's largest longitudinal study of bilingual education, noted the following:

> Bilingual-education programs that make extensive use of a language other than English typically harm limited-English-proficient children's learning English, which makes it impossible for them to participate fully in American society.

Operation Scorpion

TO THE EDITOR:

In his hard-nosed call for the overthrow of Saddam ["What to Do About Saddam Hussein," June], Joshua Muravchik recounts with sparkling lucidity the history of a catastrophic failure of American foreign and military policy, a failure for which the U.S., Israel, and perhaps other Middle Eastern countries like Kuwait will one day pay dearly.

Mr. Muravchik shows that allied defeat was snatched from the jaws of victory by a misguided and timorous George Bush-Colin Powell strategy, which is best summed up in the words of Thomas Aquinas: "If the highest aim of a captain were to preserve his ship, he would keep it in port forever."

I would like to amplify the historical record by recalling Operation Scorpion, a proposal made during the Gulf war by Henry Rowen, then-Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs. Rowen is a former president of the RAND Corporation and a former chairman of the CIA National Intelligence Council. His plan, which he described in an article in the *National Interest*, had the enthusiastic backing of then-Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney and Under Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz. But the opposition of General Colin Powell, erstwhile chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and General Norman Schwarzkopf, the field commander, proved decisive, and the plan was never adopted.

Rowen's plan, which called for the occupation of Iraq's western desert, was based on a valid assumption: the launchers for Saddam's Scud missiles, which had only a limited range, had to be somewhere in this area. If the plan had been carried out, the danger to Israel of Iraqi missile attacks would have been effectively eliminated.

Operation Scorpion, doomed never to sting, might have provided another highly attractive gain: Saddam's overthrow. The occupation of the western desert would have brought coalition troops within 60 miles of Baghdad. Since most of Saddam's troops were either in Kuwait, wreaking havoc; in the north, facing Turkey; or in the east, facing Iran, opposition to an allied assault on Baghdad would have been minimal.

Though President Bush approved the plan, he did nothing to promote it. General Schwarzkopf, in his autobiography, called it "as bad as it possibly could be." General Powell agreed. But the plan Powell developed, successful as it was, had two drawbacks. As Rowen puts it: "The Scuds flew and Saddam is still in power."

ARNOLD BEICHMAN
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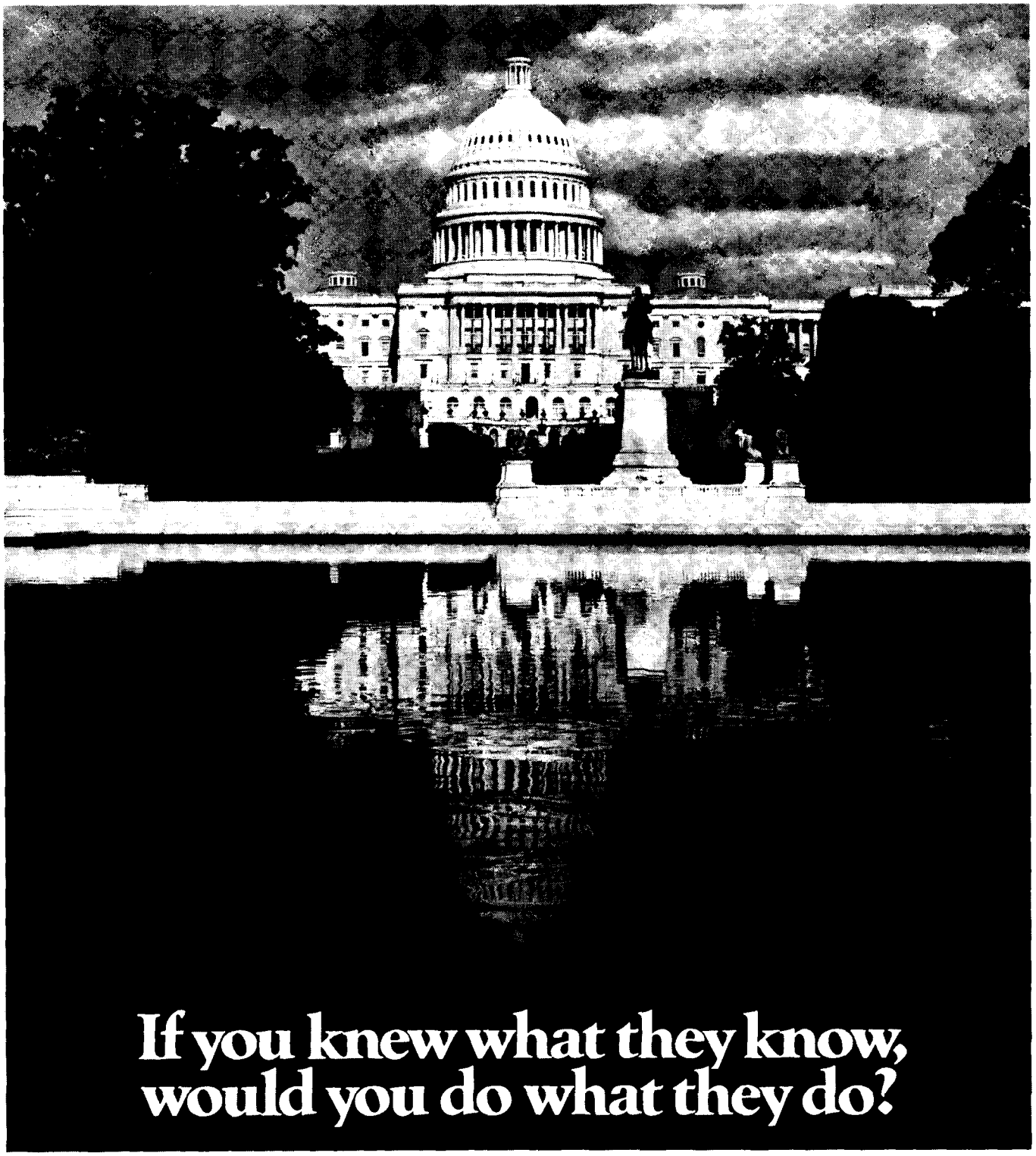

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Commentary
September 1998

Bowing to Beijing

Arthur Waldron

"I HATE our China policy!" Bill Clinton is reported to have shouted during a White House meeting in 1994, just after he had bowed to threats from Beijing and broken the linkage between China's progress on human rights and its winning of trade status as a Most Favored Nation (MFN). "I wish I was running against our China policy. I mean, we gave them MFN and we change our commercial policy, and what has it changed?"

A good question—and one that, as it happens, Bill Clinton had asked of his own predecessor. A mere two years earlier, Clinton had campaigned for the presidency by decrying the Bush administration's truckling to the "butchers of Beijing" and promising to make human rights the centerpiece of his own approach. But once in office, although he would occasionally show traces of gumption—in an unscripted moment, Clinton even told the Chinese President Jiang Zemin in 1997 that China's human-rights practices put it "on the wrong side of history"—the record of the President would come to be wholly at odds with the vows of the campaigner.

This past July, in the course of the longest trip to a single country by any American President since Woodrow Wilson went to Paris after World War I, Bill Clinton went farther than any of his predecessors in aligning U.S. policy with Beijing. In so doing, the Clinton administration undermined American alliances, abandoned longstanding American principle, and endangered American interests. The worst of it all is that it was unnecessary.

ARTHUR WALDRON *is Lauder professor of international relations at the University of Pennsylvania and director of Asian studies at the American Enterprise Institute.*

II

IN A formal sense, the strategy the Clinton administration now calls "engagement" resuscitates, and radically extends, the approach initiated by President Richard Nixon in the 1970's, when it was misleadingly termed "normalization." Though made up of several parts, then as now the essence of the strategy can be seen through its effects on the island of Taiwan, a democratic state with which we have strong ties but no formal relations since 1979, and which has been excluded from membership in international organizations.

Ceded by China to Japan in 1895, Taiwan was "returned" after World War II to the then-mainland Chinese government of Chiang Kai-shek, an American ally. By the late 1940's, however, Chiang was thoroughly embroiled in a civil war with the Chinese Communists led by Mao Zedong; as the fortunes of the struggle turned against him, he and his Nationalist forces took refuge on Taiwan. Thus the island became an American concern. With the advent of the Korean war in 1950, the United States secured the Taiwan Strait against Mao, and in 1954 we concluded a mutual-defense treaty with the Chiang-led Republic of China on Taiwan.

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Like the new Communist government in Beijing of the People's Republic of China, the government in Taipei insisted on being recognized as the only legal Chinese authority, and each considered the other's territory rightfully its own. The United States was thereby confronted with a zero-sum choice. Few doubted that good relations with the vastly larger People's Republic were in principle a desirable thing, though Mao's virulent anti-Americanism made the immediate prospect unlikely. But the idea of sacrificing Taiwan was hardly palatable. Not only was its political system, for all its grave faults, better than the one in Beijing, but the native Taiwanese were clearly the victims of history. Better educated and more advanced in many respects than their distant mainland cousins, they had not elected to join the Chinese civil war, and now they were being largely silenced by the fierce authoritarian methods of Chiang's Nationalist regime.

The American foreign-policy establishment of the 1950's and 1960's hoped to find an exit from this dead end at some future point in the proposition that we could deal diplomatically with *both* governments. Successive administrations explored either a "one-China, one-Taiwan" policy, according to which the island would be considered a fundamentally distinct entity from China, or a "two-China" policy based on the principle of dual recognition. (The latter approach is similar to the one followed today by China itself toward North and South Korea.)

By the 1970's, however, these moderate and balanced options were on the verge of being supplanted by a previously marginal idea: that Taiwan should be "de-recognized" in favor of Beijing. Two different streams came together in support of this option. By the midpoint of that dark decade, the old American foreign-policy elite was losing its nerve. The defense of South Vietnam had been bungled, and its people seemed destined to be consigned to a grim fate; an assertive Soviet Union was making political and military gains from Asia to Africa to Latin America; in Europe, Portugal appeared on the brink of going Communist. We seemed, in short, to be losing the cold war.

Into the policy vacuum created by the confusion and hesitancy of the old guard stepped a new elite, armed with ideas largely drawn from the intellectual and political arsenal of the Left. Whether or not the proponents of these ideas welcomed the prospect of an American defeat in the global struggle against Communism, they came equipped with an explanation for U.S. setbacks that put the onus squarely on the policies of the old guard, which had backed the wrong side in the Chinese civil war and intervened in Vietnam, and they saw the time as ripe to correct these grave errors.

IN THE case of China, both schools agreed that, as Communism was growing into an ever more formidable and entrenched force, the moment had come to redirect American policy. Among the younger guard, there were those who wanted to do this for practical reasons, but there were also those who had developed a credulous appraisal of Mao's regime, in fact one of the most brutal in human history, and a correspondingly distorted critique of the sins of Taiwan, where living standards were actually rising rapidly and elections were held at the grassroots level. Among the old guard, realists favored the change for another reason: extending recognition to Beijing, they calculated, would provide a deterrent balance to the expansionism of the USSR. The idea was to wrest some sort of role for the U.S. in a rapidly worsening international situation by exacerbating the divisions in the Communist bloc, rather as Talleyrand had divided the victors at Vienna in 1815 and thereby, in Henry Kissinger's phrase, restored a world.

In either case, this meant winning over Beijing, which, even though it stood to benefit from an entente at least as much as the U.S., could be counted on to charge what the traffic would bear. In 1971, Kissinger, then Richard Nixon's National Security Adviser and later to become his Secretary of State, made a secret trip to Beijing that was the first step on the road to our eventually recognizing Communist China and breaking with Taiwan. His first meeting was with Zhou Enlai, the Premier, before whom Kissinger recited the formula Beijing had demanded to hear: the United States, he said, did not seek to create "two Chinas; one China, one Taiwan; or an independent Taiwan." Although he was careful not to say what that left, and indeed omitted the whole episode from his memoirs, there was only one logical possibility: the absorption of Taiwan by China.

"No government less deserved what was about to happen to it than that of Taiwan," Kissinger would later write with melancholy. That was true enough. But even as he made the requisite noises in Beijing, both he and Nixon also knew something else: the American public would never accept the outright sacrifice of Taiwan. This gave them running room. By the time Nixon himself visited China the following year, diplomatic and military relations with Taipei still firmly in place, the farthest he would go publicly to meet Beijing's demands was to acknowledge, accurately, that "all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain that there is but one Chi-

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na and that Taiwan is part of China." The whole point of this pronouncement, contained in a jointly signed document known as the Shanghai communiqué, lay in what it did not say. While declaring to Beijing, in effect, "We recognize you," it did not say, "We also agree that Taiwan is yours."

But that hardly ended the matter. In 1979, without prior warning, Jimmy Carter announced in a second communiqué the establishing of full diplomatic relations with Beijing, this time at the price of a break with Taiwan, military as well as diplomatic. Carter spoke emolliently—"the United States is confident that the people of Taiwan face a peaceful and prosperous future"—but said nothing as to how that future would be assured. His plan, soon codified in his administration's proposed Taiwan Relations Act, offered a role for ultra-low-profile "private" organizations to look after Taiwanese political interests, while making no explicit provisions whatsoever for the island's defense.

Had things remained thus, Beijing would have moved close to its goal. Once again, however, the American people saved the day. As finally redrafted by Congress, the Taiwan Relations Act stated squarely that U.S. recognition of Communist China rested on the assumption that neither force nor the threat of force would be used against Taiwan, and provided for weapons supplies to ensure the island's defense. Carter had no choice but to sign.

Finally, in 1982, Ronald Reagan put his signature on a third joint communiqué. In it, the mainland Chinese asserted the peacefulness of their intentions toward Taiwan, and on that condition the United States agreed gradually to reduce weapons sales to the island.

THROUGHOUT THE 1980's, this basket of agreements, the so-called "three communiqués" plus the Taiwan Relations Act, governed U.S. policy. In its seeming contradictions, it embodied the subterranean struggle (which continues today) between those policy-makers who expected "normalization" to spell the end of Taiwan and those determined to prevent any such outcome. The odd thing is that, throughout the Reagan years and even beyond, the structure worked remarkably well. U.S.-China relations improved *and* Taiwan prospered. Although Beijing never explicitly renounced the use of force, both sides understood that, in fact, force was absolutely ruled out, and Beijing refrained from military deployments in the areas near Taiwan. Negotiations in which the two sides treated each other as equals got under way in Singapore in 1993.

By this time, however, two additional factors had intervened to complicate the issue. The first was the Tiananmen massacre of 1989, the naked violence of which put paid to the belief, held naively by many foreigners and even by some Taiwanese, that the island had nothing to fear from China. The second was the democratization of Taiwan itself. Over the course of the previous decade, with encouragement from the Reagan administration, Taiwan had abandoned unrealistic claims to the mainland and, most importantly, had reconstructed its political system. Martial law was abolished, political prisoners were released, the press was set free, exiles were welcomed home, and every level of government came to be elected democratically.

The only trouble with these latter developments was that they profoundly displeased Beijing. Bound formally by the three communiqués, China had nevertheless been angling all along to win Taiwan for itself by means of a deal that would be struck over the heads of its people. But in light of Tiananmen, and with power on Taiwan increasingly in the hands of these same people and their democratically chosen representatives, it was becoming clear that no such deal was going to happen. And so, starting in the 90's, Beijing began reconsidering the possible use of force.

This brings us to the present, and to Bill Clinton. In June 1995, Lee Teng-hui, Taiwan's President, was allowed to come to the United States to receive an honorary degree from Cornell. In response to this alleged "provocation"—remember that, in deference to Beijing, the U.S. still does not maintain diplomatic relations with Taiwan—China began firing missiles into waters in the island's immediate vicinity. In August, Jiang Zemin, China's President, told the publisher of Japan's *Asahi Shimbun* that "if we abandon the threat of force against Taiwan, then it is not possible that peaceful unification will be achieved."

If this was a test, the United States flunked it. However much he may have professed to "hate" his own China policy, or yearn for another, President Clinton responded to China's violation of the tacit understandings on the non-use of force by doing nothing at all. The State Department's comment—that the missile firings were "not conducive to peace and stability in the area of the Taiwan Strait"—was utterly inadequate, and helped set the stage for what was to come.

Reading all this, reasonably enough, as a sign of American acquiescence, Beijing next put into place a far more audacious set of "exercises" for early 1996. These exercises were an ugly business. On March 8, two M-9 nuclear-capable ballistic missiles were fired into the shipping lanes off the Taiwanese harbor at Kaohsiung, and another into waters near

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Taipei's port of Keelung. On March 18-25, the Chinese rehearsed an invasion of Taiwan with air, sea, and land operations including amphibious-assault drills, troop landings by helicopter, artillery firings, and troop-transport flights.

That Washington would once again refrain from reacting must have seemed a safe bet to the Chinese. As if to make certain, a Chinese general suggested in unsubtle terms to a visiting American diplomat that, whereas in the past the United States could threaten China with nuclear weapons "because we couldn't hit back," things had now changed. "You are not going to threaten us again because, in the end, you care a lot more about Los Angeles than Taipei." And indeed, as "the bludgeoning of Taiwan" (in the words of the *New York Times*) began, no American reply was initially forthcoming.*

What followed then may seem baffling, but was actually true to form. Washington did finally act: strong warnings were delivered to Beijing, and two carrier battle groups were dispatched to the area, thus putting an end to the immediate crisis. But the reckless display of Chinese brinkmanship had clearly frightened the Clinton administration, and, just as the Chinese general surmised, the intimidation worked. What emerged from the White House was not a renewed emphasis on the need to deter Chinese aggression, or to enhance the security of our democratic allies. Quite the opposite: within a few months, the White House had responded to the Chinese threats and use of violence by unveiling its new strategy of "engagement" with Beijing.

III

Couched in the language of realism, moderation, dialogue, and respect for the culture of others, the new American strategy, which the President's trip to China this past July was meant to dramatize, is a transparent exercise in accommodation. As Clinton himself put it, the purpose of his visit was to help "show a full and balanced picture of modern China to the United States and . . . [to] encourage others to come here and others to participate in the life of China." That "full and balanced picture" is, by definition, a sunny one, and its human face is Jiang Zemin, the rather mediocre figure who is China's leader.

In Clinton's Jiang, we meet again that perennial character in cold-war drama, the likable, reasonable Communist and would-be reformer. Hyped beyond recognition, this politician, who once referred to the furor over Tiananmen as "much ado about nothing," emerged in the President's tribute to him as

> a man of extraordinary intellect, very high energy, a lot of vigor for his age, or indeed any age. And I think he has a quality that is profoundly important at this moment in our history when there is so much change going on. He has a good imagination. He has vision. He can visualize. He can imagine a future that is different from the past.

Jiang, the President was saying, once again reading from the familiar cold-war script, is someone whose tenure in power is good for us, but who needs our help if he is to win the battle against his own "hard-liners." It follows that the way for us to help him is first to understand what he wants, and then to try to give it to him.

Which brings us back to Taiwan. Clinton's language on this subject, carefully prepared, was intended to signal a fundamental shift, reassuring Beijing that in any forthcoming talks—which Washington in fact looks set to sponsor—the U.S. will support its position on Taiwan's final status. Previous American formulations had referred only to the hoped-for "peaceful resolution" of the Taiwan issue, avoiding any mention of what such a resolution might consist of. Clinton, by contrast, said that he hoped one day to see "the peaceful *reunification* of China and Taiwan" (emphasis added).

That the President was not misspeaking was confirmed by his staged recitation at a Shanghai press conference of the "three noes." When the planted question was duly asked, Clinton did not even pause to praise Taiwan's democracy, something even official Beijing commentators have been known to do on television before they turn to the obligatory criticisms. Instead, he got immediately to the point: the United States, he said, would not support independence for Taiwan; it would not support any solution that would create "two Chinas" or "one China and one Taiwan"; and it would not support the admission of Taiwan to international organizations like the United Nations.

As Jim Mann of the *Los Angeles Times* correctly noted, Clinton's was "an unprecedented presidential commitment, made on Chinese soil, that ties American policy [to Beijing] more tightly than ever before." For the question may be asked: why, at this late date in history, *should* we rule out independence for Taiwan? We support the independence of all the states in the territory of the ex-Soviet Union; we support an independent Bosnia; Hillary Clinton has spoken out for a Palestinian state; even in the case of Kosovo, a State Department spokesman maintains

*On this chain of incidents and its significance, see my article, "How Not to Deal With China," COMMENTARY, March 1997.

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that "independence should be on the table." Why not for Taiwan? The only possible answer is that Beijing opposes it. And why should we not support membership in the UN for a state that obviously meets every relevant criterion? The answer is the same: Beijing opposes it.

In brief, from an ambiguous and open-ended approach premised on no use and no threat of force, the U.S. has now moved to a strategy, sparked precisely by the successful use of mainland Chinese force against Taiwan, in which the outcome is strictly circumscribed and which carries the implicit warning to the Taiwanese that challenging the new understanding will entail the loss of American support. This is hardly a glorious position for the world's oldest democracy to be adopting toward a democratic ally. And it is profoundly unrealistic to boot. Does anyone believe that Taiwan is *ever* going to fly the flag of the People's Republic of China atop its public buildings, or agree to cease electing its own president, except at bayonet point? Yet our entire strategy invites the display of bayonets, and possibly their use.

IV

JUST AS the administration has reacted to Chinese intimidation by distancing itself from Taiwan, so it has thrown in its lot with the present political arrangement in Beijing, eschewing any attempt to bring about internal change and basing its hopes for the future on continued "dialogue." The mistake is no less grievous, and no less foolhardy.

China's accumulated problems differ in their precise composition from those that brought the Soviet Union to its knees, but they are parallel in scale and gravity. In the economic sphere, the country's banking system is insolvent, its state-owned enterprises mostly lose money, its currency will probably have to be devalued. In the political sphere, the one-party dictatorship is keeping its lease on life through the encouragement of private economic growth, the vigorous (if selective) repression of dissent, and lots of foreign support.

As Clinton himself told Jiang Zemin a year ago, the tide of history is flowing strongly against Beijing's dictatorship. The generation now coming to maturity, in a world of spreading knowledge, relative abundance, and rising expectations, will not tolerate indefinitely the archaic and dysfunctional Leninist system now in place. How will it be transformed? What of the crushing legacy of repression? What of Tibet and Muslim Xinjiang, where Beijing has flooded the native population with Chinese immigrants, and ravaged the indigenous culture and religion? "All of these things," in the words of a graffito that appeared in Beijing in English shortly after the Tiananmen massacre, "are to be answered for."

So far, the answer of the Clinton administration to "all of these things" has been to put itself on the side of dictatorship. True, Clinton is not the first American President to adopt this position toward a Communist regime, and China is not the only Communist regime to have benefited from it. But at least during the era of détente with the Soviet Union there was a kind of excuse. In those days, few informed people thought the end of Communism was nigh or even conceivable, and no one thought much about how the world might be reconstructed after Communism fell. Even when the USSR was finally collapsing, we backed Gorbachev to the bitter end and were nonplussed when the Lithuanians and the rest declared independence.

But all that is presumably behind us, and presumably we have learned our lesson. In light of what we have seen since the mid-1980's, not only in Eastern Europe and Latin America but across Asia, the notion that China may also one day democratize is no fantasy; it is simple realism. Nor are pro-democratic forces lacking in China, even at high levels. The regime that Clinton visited, after all, is a post-Tiananmen regime. Had he traveled to Beijing not in 1998 but early in 1989, the year that saw, in China, the largest demonstrations *in human history* in support of democracy, Clinton would have met figures absent from today's scene like Zhao Ziyang, the liberalizing general secretary of the Communist party.

One who did meet Zhao that year was Chris Patten, then the British governor of Hong Kong. After a rather forced discussion of economic questions, Patten finally asked Zhao "to tell us what was happening all around us."

> With an almost audible sigh of relief, [Zhao] produced from his pocket a card covered in headings and embarked on a long reply. He told us he was confident that legal and democratic avenues would be found to resolve the students' demands. The students' concerns about corruption and graft were shared by the party and the government. Zhao was articulate and convincing. He was also throwing down the gauntlet at the feet of the party hard-liners. When this "speech" was reported on the evening news, the students in the square applauded. Zhao's more mule-headed colleagues presumably began to sharpen their knives.*

* This is taken from Patten's fascinating new book, *East and West: China, Power, and the Future of Asia*. Times Books, 320 pp., $25.00.

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We all know what happened. On June 4, the tanks abruptly closed off the path to pluralism and legitimate government; the populace was terrorized; Zhao was placed under house arrest and many of his followers went to prison; and gradually, things got back to "normal," where they remain today. The means securing this end have been a solid wall of official denial, to which Clinton added a few bricks with his own symbolic appearance in Tiananmen Square.

BUT THE story is hardly over. In a letter smuggled out just before the President's visit this past July, Zhao wrote hopefully that "we are facing the arrival of a new, open, democratic, and information-age era. What reason do we have to reject the will of the people, cling to the June 4 problem, and block our road to democratic politics?" His words make an especially stark contrast with Clinton's own awkward comments on the "June 4 problem" when he appeared in Tiananmen Square.

The President's speech contained not the slightest allusion to what the Chinese themselves might think about the practice of murdering students. For all one could gather from his remarks—"I believe, and the American people believe, that the use of force and the tragic loss of life were wrong"—an aversion to official violence is just a cultural peculiarity of Americans, like (in its way) an inclination to democratic politics. Speaking "for China," Jiang Zemin said as much in his response to the President. But few Chinese, comparing Zhao to Jiang, would be in doubt as to which of them really does speak for his country.

The fact is that Zhao Ziyang, who has never recanted his views, almost certainly enjoys far more support both inside and outside the party than does Jiang. Chinese politics is like a play, in which only one cast is on stage at a time. But other casts are waiting in the wings, or in prison. From this perspective, Zhao and his followers are an unseen but powerful presence of which all Chinese are aware but to which most foreigners, including the President of the United States, seem totally oblivious.

Although the administration behaves as if the main obstacle in U.S.-Chinese relations is mutual misunderstanding, in fact the issues between Washington and Beijing—emphatically including the issue of Taiwan—are consequences of a fundamental and unresolved problem: the unstable and dictatorial political regime of Communist China. Given that Jiang's government has let it be known that no political reform is planned, we may expect that change, when it does come, will be unplanned, unmanaged, chaotic, and dangerous—to China, to Asia, and to the world. By embracing the Chinese status quo more tightly than any of its predecessors, the Clinton administration is helping to ensure that when that fateful moment arrives, America will have distanced itself from those on whose side its standard should be most firmly planted.

V

WHERE DO we go from here? To begin with, it must be understood that the alternative to Clinton's "engagement" policy is not, as the administration would have us believe, the "isolation" of China and a new cold war. Rather, it is engagement of another sort: one in which our allies and our democratic values come first and in which threats of force do not elicit American retreats. It is preposterous to take China pretty much as a given, as we once took the USSR, and then consider how the rest of Asia and the world will have to adjust in deference to its needs, sensitivities, and spheres of interest. To the contrary, our own policy must be based on a security system among us and the democratic states of Asia in which China is not a crucial load-bearing element.

Such a policy, instead of attempting to isolate and pressure Taiwan ("put it in a box," in the term favored by the administration), would forthrightly support the island's democratization, push Beijing to accept its reality, and, without foreclosing any options, seek to find it a legitimate place in the international community. It would confront China over the sale of missiles and other weapons to regimes, like Iran and Pakistan, with the potential to cause international mayhem. It would protest vigorously China's continuing crackdown on human rights, vividly exemplified by the arrest and imprisonment of many dissidents as soon as Clinton left the country. It would recognize democratization as indispensable to a genuinely peaceful future.

Above all, such a policy would proceed from the lessons learned by the end of the cold war in the West. As we once staked too much on the Soviet Union, so we are staking too much on China, going long when we should be hedging, and shorting the fundamentals. By this means we are setting ourselves up for disaster when Chinese Communism sells off. It is time to recognize that the challenge in Asia is not to "restore" a world but to surmount the coming upheaval and help bring about, for ourselves and our allies, the future *we* wish to live in.

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Nerve Gas, Lies, and Videotape

Joshua Muravchik

On the first Sunday in June, amid much fanfare, the Cable News Network (CNN) launched a new prime-time, magazine-format program called *Newsstand*. This was a unique joint venture with *Time* magazine, and to emphasize its roots in the finest traditions of journalism, the program, the product of "two of the world's leading news organizations on special assignment," began from Manhattan's Greeley Square. "It's named after Horace Greeley, one of America's great newspapermen," explained Jeff Greenfield, the co-host. "We thought we'd come to a place that honors journalism's past to begin a new venture of our own," added his partner, Bernard Shaw.

As if to demonstrate the bold integrity undergirding the new endeavor, one of the three segments aired in the maiden broadcast focused on "the hypocrisy of the media." But the lead story, touted for days in advertisements for the show, was entitled "Valley of Death" and concerned hypocrisy of far graver import. Greenfield solemnized:

> Earlier this year, the United States nearly went to war with Iraq over its chemical and biological weapons. Now CNN and *Time*, after an eight-month investigation, report that the United States military used lethal nerve gas during the Vietnam war.

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More shocking still, as Shaw elaborated, the occasion for this violation of declared U.S. policy and international law was a 1970 mission to kill *American* soldiers who had defected to the enemy. That mission, chimed in the show's narrator, the veteran CNN correspondent Peter Arnett, was code-named "Tailwind," and it was carried out by a secret, elite unit of the Special Forces with the deliberately innocuous name of "Studies and Observations Group" or "SOG." Notwithstanding American professions of respect for the neutrality of Laos, SOG units routinely crossed into that country, where, in Arnett's words, "the hunting and killing of American defectors was a high priority." Tailwind, summarized Greenfield, was "a top-secret effort . . . to find and kill those defectors by virtually any means necessary."

Knitting together material from interviews with a handful of Tailwind veterans—"voices the U.S. government never wanted you to hear"—"Valley of Death" told how SOG commandos approached a Laotian village where American defectors had been spotted by reconnaissance units. "During the evening," Arnett narrated, "American planes gassed the camp with deadly sarin nerve gas." The next morning, the SOG unit attacked. One of its members, a Lieutenant Robert Van Buskirk, appeared on camera in "Valley of Death" to recall chasing two American defectors into a "spider hole" and dropping a deadly phosphorous grenade on them.

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After destroying the village, and killing most or all of its inhabitants, the team prepared to be lifted out. But then it came under attack from enemy forces. In order to cover the escape, two U.S. bombers dropped additional loads of nerve gas onto the battlefield. "Running . . . shooting . . . throwing up . . . unable to breath," in Van Buskirk's words, the Americans clambered over enemy bodies into their choppers and made their getaway.

Interspersed with the vivid recollections of derring-do in the CNN narrative were bits of an interview with retired Admiral Thomas Moorer. At the time of the events in question, Moorer had been serving as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Now, his responses to questions put to him by the CNN producer April Oliver lent oblique support to the show's conclusions.

Those conclusions concerned not only the two key revelations about nerve gas and "hunt/kill raid[s] for American defectors," highlighted at the beginning and end of the show, but a third element: the fact that, according to Arnett, the casualties of this devastating attack "includ[ed] women and children." That viewers were meant to be reminded by this of the notorious incident at My Lai, where Vietnamese civilians were killed by American troops under the direction of Lieutenant William Calley, was underscored by Bernard Shaw's breaking into a commercial pause in the middle of the Tailwind report to announce a *Time* "Milestone"—the death of Colonel Oran K. Henderson, "the highest ranking officer ever tried for the infamous My Lai massacre." (Henderson had not actually been present at My Lai, but was tried—and acquitted—for failing to investigate the killings.)

By CNN's account, indeed, the killing of women and children in operation Tailwind was not only reminiscent of My Lai, it was even more horrifying. The My Lai victims were shot; the victims of Tailwind were subjected to a more hideous death by nerve gas. The My Lai killings were carried out by a unit unnerved by the casualties inflicted on it by Vietcong guerrillas hidden among civilians; the Tailwind force, by contrast, was an elite unit on an offensive mission against a carefully chosen target, so bent on wiping out American defectors that it did not care whom else it killed in the process.

THE GRUESOME story told on CNN on Sunday evening was told again in the next morning's edition of *Time*, where it appeared under the joint byline of April Oliver and Peter Arnett. The one-two punch proved successful. Although the events described had occurred 28 years earlier, the allegations, involving acts so abhorrent, and reported by two news organizations so respectable, created a sensation. In the days immediately following, although Pentagon spokesmen challenged some aspects of the CNN-*Time* account, they were unable to offer a blanket denial, and Secretary of Defense William Cohen ordered a full-scale investigation.

Within CNN, one individual, Perry Smith, also began an investigation of his own. A retired Air Force major general, Smith had been retained as CNN's "military adviser" since the Persian Gulf war in 1991. Oddly, however, Smith, who had flown 130 missions over Laos during the Vietnam conflict, was not consulted in the preparation of the report on Tailwind. Now undertaking his private inquiry, he concluded within a matter of days after viewing the show that the story it told was false, and he urged the network's top executives to issue a retraction.

This they declined to do. Instead, a follow-up report appeared on the next week's *Newsstand*, noting some of the criticisms of the original program but restating and strengthening its conclusions. Admiral Moorer, for example, flatly denied authorizing the use of sarin or possessing information of its use. CNN chose to construe his statement not as casting doubt on its claim that nerve gas was used but rather as opening a new mystery about who had ordered it; stringing together a couple of ambiguous sound bites, CNN's reporter speculated that authorization might have "come from the Nixon White House."

But even as CNN was shrugging off the protests of its own military consultant—who resigned from the network in disgust after the follow-up broadcast—further blows were in store. The first came from *Newsweek*, which, in a departure from the unwritten rule that major news outlets refrain from criticizing their competitors directly, raised "serious doubts" about the CNN-*Time* account. In particular, it seemed that Van Buskirk, the lieutenant whose story constituted the centerpiece of the show, had acknowledged having lost for 24 years any memory of killing Americans, until suddenly recalling the events during the course of an interview with the producer of "Valley of Death," April Oliver.

Under mounting pressure, CNN executives now hired a noted civil-liberties attorney, Floyd Abrams, to conduct an investigation of the broadcast. *Time* did its own investigation, interviewing various veterans of Operation Tailwind who repudiated

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critical elements in "Valley of Death." A week later, Abrams issued his conclusion:

> [T]he central thesis of the broadcast could not be sustained at the time of the broadcast itself and cannot be sustained now. . . . CNN should retract the broadcast and apologize to the public and, in particular, the participants in Operation Tailwind.

Both CNN and *Time* promptly did as Abrams recommended. And other actions followed as well. Although Abrams had gone out of his way to affirm that April Oliver and her collaborator, CNN senior producer Jack Smith, believed in the truth of their allegations, both were fired. Their immediate supervisor, Pamela Hill, the vice president in charge of CNN's investigative unit, resigned.

But the repercussions did not travel any further. Although CNN founder Ted Turner lamented that "nothing," not even the death of his father, had "upset me more, probably, in my whole life" than this fiasco, he turned down the offer of a resignation from Tom Johnson, CNN's chief operating officer. As for the network's president, Richard Kaplan, whose brainchild *Newsstand* was, he treated himself indulgently. "Like all . . . good managers, when something happens . . . in your division . . . you want to take responsibility for it," Kaplan said. But "I was not part of the investigation that turned out the bad . . . journalism."

Kaplan did acknowledge having reviewed "Valley of Death" a week before it went on the air. But when pressed as to whether he should have "asked a lot tougher questions," he replied: "I asked all the questions I knew to ask." It later emerged that Tom Johnson, who is Kaplan's superior, had requested that the show be vetted by the military consultant Perry Smith, but had yielded to Kaplan's insistence that Smith be excluded lest his involvement, in the words of a senior network executive, "leak the gist of the story to the Pentagon prematurely."

The show's narrator, Peter Arnett, also escaped serious punishment, instead being given what Kaplan called "a very stern reprimand." Arnett, who cultivates a swaggering image of journalistic fearlessness; who had collaborated with Oliver on a similar though less publicized Vietnam exposé nine months before; and who had taken on the Tailwind assignment voluntarily, now exculpated himself in pathetic terms. Protesting that he had written "not one comma" of the script—later he would concede having offered "a few suggestions"—Arnett averred that he "was never informed that my face on the air gave me responsibility for [the] story." "I'm a company guy," he proclaimed. "You want me to read a script, I'll read it." Left unexplained was the question of how this excused him from authorial responsibility for the version that appeared in *Time*, co-signed by him and April Oliver.

HOWEVER THE blame is apportioned, CNN and *Time*'s Tailwind story was a travesty of journalism.

In its initial defense of the broadcast, CNN referred repeatedly to the "more than 200 interviews" it had conducted with military personnel up and down the chain of command. What it did not say was that the overwhelming majority of the interviewees who had knowledge of Operation Tailwind, had repudiated the show's thesis. For the most part, they were not put on the air or quoted in *Time*'s print version. And to the extent they *were* heard, Tailwind and SOG veterans who denied *Newsstand*'s claims were edited in such a way as to suggest they were dupes or perpetrators of a government cover-up. When asked later why more space had not been given to the denials, Oliver replied, "Getting into the various potential cover stories could possibly be confusing to the audience."

As for those confirming *Newsstand*'s allegations, the principal source was Lieutenant Van Buskirk. But, as *Newsweek* would point out, the tale Van Buskirk told in "Valley of Death" was at odds with the official account of the mission he himself had given to his superiors at the time.

Because the mission commander, Captain Eugene McCarley, was seriously wounded in the mouth and unable to speak easily, Van Buskirk was chosen to deliver an after-action briefing to General Creighton Abrams, the U.S. commander in Vietnam. The written text of Van Buskirk's briefing refers to the use of *tear gas*, not nerve gas. (Tear gas, which can be instantly debilitating but leaves no permanent effects, was indeed used numerous times in search-and-rescue missions to extricate Americans in hostile surroundings.) Nor does Van Buskirk's text mention American defectors. The purpose of Tailwind, it states, was "to collect . . . intelligence and to create a diversion in support of" another covert U.S. operation in Laos. This is exactly what other Tailwind veterans have said, though *Newsstand* failed to quote them or put them on camera.

A second written statement of Van Buskirk's from that time—nominating a Tailwind participant for a medal for heroism—describes the mission in similar terms. It, too, refers to tear gas, not nerve gas, and it, too, makes no mention of defectors.

Van Buskirk's road since Vietnam has been a

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rocky one, including, by his own account, an arrest in Germany on the charge of running guns to the terrorist Baader-Meinhoff gang; heavy drinking; and post-traumatic stress disorder. ("I was under treatment for ten years with lithium and mind-bending drugs," he recalls.) He now says that it was during the course of a religious vision in his German jail cell in 1974 that he repressed all memory of killing the American defectors. When April Oliver's interview brought it back, he initially recalled his victims as Russians, only eventually coming to the belief that they were Americans. Since the controversy over "Valley of Death" broke out, Van Buskirk has told news organizations that he is uncertain about the type of gas involved or the nationality of those he killed.

THE SECOND main prop of *Newsstand*'s sensational revelations was Admiral Moorer's purported confirmation of the key findings. As I have already mentioned, Moorer, who is nearing his eighty-seventh birthday, has denied saying either that nerve gas was used or that Tailwind's purpose included the pursuit of American defectors. On the latter issue, indeed, the best that CNN could come up with was a snippet of Moorer saying, "I'm sure there were some defectors. There are always defectors." To repair the obvious emptiness of these words, Arnett then hastened to assure viewers, "Admiral Moorer acknowledged in an off-camera interview that Tailwind's target was, indeed, defectors." Why he could not be induced to say this before the camera was not explained.

To bolster its nerve-gas claim, CNN offered a somewhat stronger tidbit from Moorer. On camera, Oliver asks: "So isn't it fair to say that Tailwind proved that [sarin] is an effective weapon?" Moorer replies: "Yes, I think, but I think that was already known, otherwise it never would have been manufactured." Moorer later complained that he had been posed a series of "trick questions," and the show's outtakes, examined by Floyd Abrams, sustain the complaint. Here is the exchange that was left in the cutting room:

> *Oliver*: The reason we're interested in Tailwind is that we've been told by a lot of people now that it was the first time that . . . the U.S. ever used what's known as a lethal nerve gas in combat. . . . How much awareness do you have of this?
>
> *Moorer*: None. And what you should do, when you make a statement like that, is . . . get all those people in front of this camera . . .
>
> *Oliver*: We have.
>
> *Moorer*: . . . and let them tell you that was the case.
>
> *Oliver*: We have gotten that.
>
> *Moorer*: But I don't have the information to confirm what they said.

After much discussion of how nerve gas works, Oliver then smuggles in her question about whether Tailwind proved sarin's effectiveness. She tries to nail down her point by asking, "So you are aware sarin was used?" But Moorer's response clearly sent her back to the cutting machine: "I am not confirming for you that it was used. You have told me that."

IN ADDITION to its interviews with Van Buskirk and Moorer, *Newsstand* aired several minor snippets meant to reinforce its claim that the target of the mission was American defectors. In one of these, a veteran named Jay Graves was introduced as a "SOG reconnaissance-team leader, dropped into Laos several days before the Tailwind commando team." On air, Graves says: "We saw some round-eyed people. We don't know whether they're prisoners or whatever." Floyd Abrams faulted the broadcast for omitting Graves's clarifying comment that by "we" he meant members of his team: "I didn't ever see any of them," he admitted. But the facts are worse than Abrams knew. There was no such team, and Graves has since signed a statement conceding that he "did not participate in Operation Tailwind as an advanced recon or in any other way."

Jim Cathey, the other veteran who appeared on the program in this connection, was a no less problematic choice. Military records show that he was nowhere near the mission, and participants in Tailwind say not only that they never met Cathey but that he was never a member of SOG. Cathey, who held an Air Force desk job in Vietnam, claims to have been mysteriously and abruptly tapped for the secret mission while on a week's furlough in Saigon. SOG veterans find this preposterous: SOG undertook some of America's most secret and taxing work, and admittance into the unit required careful screening and a long period of training. The only Tailwind veteran who does know Cathey, Van Buskirk, says he met him first in the United States about ten years ago. (He also claims to have recognized Cathey's voice from the field radio during Operation Tailwind.) Apparently it was Van Buskirk who led Oliver to Cathey.

Jay Graves, the reconnaissance-team leader who was not there, was also brought on by CNN to

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confirm the use of nerve gas. So was a SOG veteran named Michael Hagen. Hagen suffers today from numbness below the knees, and is seeking a full disability pension from the government. Although the onset of his ailment does not date back to Vietnam, he believes—as do, *mutatis mutandis*, many veterans of the Gulf war—that it derives from the aftereffects of exposure to nerve gas. If he is correct, his would be a novel case: sarin is known not for subtle, delayed effects but for powerful and immediate ones. In any event, in its version of the Tailwind story, *Time* mentioned Hagen's condition but not the compromising fact that he is looking for compensation; CNN mentioned neither.

Still another witness cited by *Time*, Tailwind veteran Craig Schmidt, has protested that his words were twisted into the opposite of what he actually said. (His remarks did not appear on CNN because they were not on tape but came from Oliver's notes.) "It doesn't surprise me in the slightest bit that it was nerve gas," Schmidt is quoted in *Time*. But, he has since asserted, "I believe my exact [words were], 'I would be surprised if it was nerve gas.'"

Finally, both CNN and *Time* referred to the encampment overrun by the Tailwind force as a "village" or as a "village base camp." No evidence has ever been offered for this assertion. According to veterans of Tailwind, the site was a military base on the Ho Chi Minh trail, the main route for North Vietnamese forces and supplies flowing south; since the trail was a prime target of U.S. bombers, Laotian villagers would have long since fled the area.

Indeed, *Newsstand* was apparently unable to find anyone who would state that women and children were killed in the operation. Arnett simply asserted this himself, buttressing his claim with a quotation from Hagen: "the majority of the people there were not combat personnel. The few infantry people they had we overran immediately. We basically destroyed everything there." But as Floyd Abrams pointed out, this quotation had been edited to drop a crucial sentence. After the words "combat personnel," Hagen added, "they were more of a transportation unit"—just what one would expect to find along the Ho Chi Minh trail.

SINCE THEIR firing, April Oliver and Jack Smith have adamantly defended the program, even releasing an 80-page rebuttal to Floyd Abrams. Calling Abrams's report "a corporate whitewash," they charge that CNN has succumbed to irresistible pressure from the Pentagon and to the fear that veterans' groups will boycott CNN advertisers. They also warn that their sources, and even their sources' children, have come under death threats. All this, they suggest, is in the service of covering up a story even bigger than the one revealed on *Newsstand*. They claim to have a new witness, replete with supporting documents, who journeyed from camp to camp inside Cambodia, zapping U.S. defectors with nerve gas.

Such accusations may help make Oliver and Smith a laughingstock among their colleagues in broadcast news, but in truth they are hardly more far-fetched than the original Tailwind tale. The Pentagon knows of only two defectors—as distinct from deserters—during the entire Vietnam war. If there were others, they would hardly have been encamped with transportation units along the Ho Chi Minh trail in Laos rather than, say, settled in Hanoi where they could provide intelligence and propaganda.

As for sarin gas, which was indeed in the U.S. arsenal, none ever got closer to Indochina than Okinawa. The need would have had to be overwhelming before the U.S. would even contemplate using such a weapon, as no one should know better than Peter Arnett. It was he, after all, who first exposed the use of tear gas in Vietnam in 1965; though the substance was hardly lethal, the fact that gas had been used at all created such a scandal that Arnett won a Pulitzer prize for his reporting, thus launching his way into press stardom.

Besides, if nerve gas *had* been used, everyone in the "village" on which it was sprayed, including the alleged defectors jumping into a "spider hole," would have been dead, and so too would the Americans on the mission. Sarin is toxic through the skin, even more toxic if inhaled. U.S. military training manuals prescribe a wait of 32 days before an area contaminated by nerve gas can be safely occupied. Yet, according to *Newsstand*, sarin was employed as a prelude to the next morning's assault. As one SOG veteran put it: "Had anybody tried to suggest such a harebrained tactical solution [as the use of nerve gas] for any of our missions, the SOG troopers I knew would have shot him, once they stopped laughing long enough to take aim."

HOW, THEN, did such a harebrained story get on prime-time television and into the pages of *Time*?

The answer begins with the team that produced it, of which Jack Smith was the senior member and April Oliver decidedly the leader. The deceptive editing done in their cutting room constituted only the finishing touches to an entire unscrupulous process by which they put the piece together.

While secretly intending to make them out as

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war criminals, Smith and Oliver wormed their way into the living rooms of Tailwind veterans by promising at last to tell their heroic story. When, over and over again, the men failed to supply the answers required of them, the producers claimed to be in possession of documents or authoritative witnesses confirming their charges. Just as Admiral Moorer was told misleadingly that there were witnesses on tape attesting to the use of nerve gas during Tailwind, so subsequent interviewees were informed that no lesser a personage than Admiral Moorer himself, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, had confirmed this same "fact." Even Van Buskirk and Hagen, the two flawed witnesses who were the only veterans of Tailwind to suggest that nerve gas had been used, have since said that they heard it first from Oliver.

But if the answer begins with Oliver and Smith, it hardly ends there. The two of them worked under the aegis of Richard Kaplan, a "prominent news showman" (in the words of the *New Yorker*) who had been hired away from ABC "in the hope of acquiring some of the stylishness and polish of the big broadcast networks." When Kaplan decided to keep Perry Smith in the dark, for fear the story would leak to the Pentagon, what exactly was he afraid of? It seems unlikely he could have guessed the whole story would turn out to be fictitious. The probability is that he was worried lest contradictory information be brought to bear that would introduce ambiguity into Oliver and Smith's showman-like clarity.

HERE WE come close to one heart of the matter. The transformation of the news business into show business, a tendency most pronounced on television but touching the print media as well, is by now a much remarked-upon phenomenon. Earlier this year, when scandals involving made-up stories or breaches of ethics rocked the *New Republic*, the *Boston Globe*, and the *Cincinnati Inquirer*, the explanation most frequently proffered was that journalists today labor under a new pressure: the quest for celebrity.

Ironically enough, this, too, is a legacy of the Vietnam war. For it was in the reporting of that war that the journalists who covered it replaced the soldiers who fought it as heroes of the American media. No one better symbolizes this process than the other major culprit in the Tailwind affair, Peter Arnett. And Arnett also embodies another large part of the answer to how this fiasco occurred: a reflexive adversarialism toward established American institutions, foremost among them the military.

About "Valley of Death," *Newsweek* put the case bluntly: "The fact that no regular staffer at CNN challenged [Oliver's] overall thesis until after it was proved wrong says much about the casual (and usually false) assumption that the U.S. military routinely ordered atrocities in the Vietnam war." Evidence that this assumption was at work at CNN can be found in another program that was broadcast during the previous year.

In September 1997, CNN viewers were introduced to SOG on *Impact*, a magazine-style precursor to *Newsstand*. That segment, too, was the fruit of collaboration between producer Oliver and narrator Arnett. It charged that SOG teams were armed with a (nonlethal) incapacitating gas. According to CNN, members of these teams, when captured, were deliberately killed in B-52 strikes to prevent them from falling into enemy hands.

In a sense, this show was even more sensational than the Tailwind story to come. If the alleged targeting of defectors is a scandal, how much more so is the targeting of our own men as they faithfully go about their missions? Yet CNN aired this story on prime time with nothing more to support it than a single source who claimed as his authority other, anonymous sources, plus a few of those suggestive but ambiguous snippets of sound that are April Oliver's trademark.

If the casual assumption of American wrongdoing began in Vietnam, it hardly ended there, and it has hardly been limited to coverage of Vietnam itself. Thus, to confine ourselves to recent episodes on CNN, still another dubious report was broadcast in July 1997, produced and narrated by a wholly different team. It "exposed" a cover-up of wrongful deaths and ecological damage from the reckless burning of hazardous waste at a secret Air Force testing ground in Nevada. The fact that these charges had been thoroughly investigated by the Department of Justice and the Environmental Protection Agency—and found baseless—was not mentioned. The show provoked Perry Smith, who had been excluded from its preparation just as he would later be excluded from "Valley of Death," to send Tom Johnson a note of protest calling it "yellow journalism at its worst."

Then there is the post-Vietnam career of Peter Arnett himself. During Operation Desert Storm, he found further stardom when he became the one major U.S. correspondent whom the government of Iraq allowed to stay in Baghdad to report the war. When U.S. bombs destroyed a bunker resulting in civilian casualties, Arnett not only reported the event but went out of his way to contest the ar-

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guments of U.S. officials that the facility had been identified as a military command post. Similarly, when American air strikes demolished what U.S. intelligence had reported to be a biological-weapons facility, Arnett backed Baghdad's (unlikely) claim that the site actually housed an infant-formula factory.

BUT JUST as it would be wrong to focus on one producer or one journalist, so it would be wrong to focus on one network. All the major culprits in the Tailwind episode had enjoyed successful careers at other news organizations before joining CNN: Arnett at AP, Oliver at PBS, Jack Smith at CBS, and Richard Kaplan and Pamela Hill at ABC. CNN's fabricated tale was, moreover, less an aberration than an extreme case, the hypertrophic manifestation of tendencies and prejudices that pervade the world of American journalism, and have done so for decades.

The good news is that, within that same world, certain hopeful signs have lately emerged, one of them being the reaction to "Valley of Death" itself. By bringing in Floyd Abrams, CNN, prodded by skeptical analyses in *Newsweek*, on the Fox network, and elsewhere, did belatedly seek the truth. Following Abrams's report, furthermore, CNN correspondents like Christiane Amanpour and Jamie McIntyre vented bitter anger at Arnett, Oliver, and Smith for the disgrace that, by association, had spilled over onto them as well. Similar sentiments have been reported among the staff at *Time*. Even beyond the two news organizations directly involved, journalists seem well aware of the extent to which this episode has further damaged the collective credibility of the media in the eyes of a public already deeply suspicious of their objectivity and trustworthiness.

Whether anything will come of all this is another question. In venting his embarrassment after the Abrams report, Ted Turner declared that he "would take my shirt off and beat myself bloody," or that he and his colleagues would "commit mass suicide," if that would make up for what they had done. CNN has since embarked on a more practical course: offering cash settlements to those misrepresented on the program, so as to forestall lawsuits. In this way, the network may pay off the private debts it has incurred to the men it maligned.

But there will remain a public debt to the nation and its armed forces. CNN might begin to pay *this* debt by telling the true story of SOG and Tailwind, or some of the other heroic missions undertaken by the slandered American military in Vietnam. And why not let Floyd Abrams or some other objective outsider take a look at others of CNN's dubious programs, and see how they stand up? Does the fact that it has not occurred to anyone in the media to ask for such an inquiry suggest, perhaps, where the real cover-up still lies?

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Does Conservative Judaism Have a Future?

Clifford E. Librach

In any religion, the middle position is the hardest to define and the toughest to defend. For American Jews, this position has been occupied for close to a century by Conservative Judaism. Until very recently, indeed, most American Jews affiliated with synagogues have, in the tripartite division of modern Judaism, found their home in this movement, a uniquely American phenomenon that locates itself between the "extremes" of Reform to its Left and Orthodoxy to its Right.

Since its inception in the late 19th century, Conservative Judaism has insisted that, unlike Reform, it is committed to Judaism not only as a faith but as a system of *law*, and to the norms of ritual behavior embodied in the rabbinic legal tradition known as *halakhah*. At the same time, and in contrast to Orthodoxy on its Right, Conservatism has also prided itself on its flexibility, its willingness to adapt to modern ideas. Examples of how this balancing act has worked itself out historically include these: while adhering formally to such staples of strict Jewish religious practice as the laws of diet (*kashrut*) and Sabbath-observance, the Conservative movement long ago ruled that mixed seating was permitted in religious services, as was driving to the synagogue on the Sabbath. More recently it has continued to mark its deviation from Orthodox norms by instituting complete egalitarianism between the sexes when it comes to leading public prayers and by ordaining women as rabbis.

But now the movement is in trouble. Just as American cultural life in general has become marked by the breakdown of consensus and the rise of polarization, so in Jewish religious life Conservatism has been finding the middle a lonely place. To the Left, Reform Judaism, demanding less and less of its adherents, offers an attractive and demographically bulging way-station for Conservative Jews on the road to religious oblivion. In the meantime, the still relatively small Orthodox movement, once perceived as hopelessly rigid and even bizarre in its unyielding attachment to the punctilious observance of religious law, is enjoying a surge of dynamism as a countercultural stay against the moral and spiritual anomie of postmodern America and non-Orthodox Judaism alike.

A good place to observe the tensions within today's Conservatism is the institution where, over the last century, the doctrinal arguments between tradition and the new have been conducted, where the resultant middle ground has been codified and promulgated, and where the movement's rabbis and cantors—its intermediaries with Conservative Jews "out there"—are trained. This is the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS), Conservatism's rabbinical academy, located near Columbia University in New York City.

We are fortunate in having before us a new, two-

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volume history and self-analysis of the Seminary edited by Jack Wertheimer, a member of the JTS faculty and one of contemporary Judaism's premier sociologists and critics.* To his great credit, Wertheimer has not attempted to offer in these two volumes a simple, linear account of the Seminary's history. Rather, he has invited a variety of perspectives from within and without the institution. The 36 separate essays in *Tradition Renewed* vary in style and quality, and there is more overlapping among them than one would like. But together they form a structure that amounts to more than its individual parts.

For the patient reader, there are many nuggets to be mined from these glimpses into a history rich in nuance, irony, high seriousness, and colorful personality. Coming as it does at a moment of ferment and crisis, *Tradition Renewed* offers a good occasion to reflect on the movement's past, present, and future.

Just as Conservative Judaism emerged on the American scene as a corrective to radical Reform, so JTS emerged as a corrective to Hebrew Union College (HUC), the training school in Cincinnati of Reform rabbis. The precipitating event can even be specified with precision. In 1883, at a celebration banquet for the first graduates of HUC, the Reform movement publicly proclaimed its liberation from traditional Judaism—"kitchen Judaism," in the derisive phrase of Isaac Mayer Wise, Reform's founding father—by ostentatiously serving non-kosher delicacies to the assembled guests. The "*treifa* banquet," as it quickly became known, raised a storm of protest—several rabbis among the invited guests reportedly walked out—and sparked a search for another seminary to check HUC's then-monopoly in the field of non-Orthodox rabbinical education in America.

To be sure, the Jewish Theological Seminary, which was founded in 1886, had its forerunners; Maimonides College, established in 1867 in Philadelphia and associated with the University of Pennsylvania, was an earlier, failed expression of the desire to marry a commitment to traditional Jewish religious norms with modern culture and free intellectual inquiry. Nor were the motives of JTS's founders altogether unmixed. Much has been made, for example, of the fact that the school was established by wealthy Reform Jews of German origin, some of whom may have been prompted by a desire to keep their embarrassingly unacculturated and Yiddish-speaking Eastern European co-religionists, then arriving on these shores in great numbers, as far away as possible from their own posh venues.

Although the evidence for this particular charge is scanty, JTS did in fact go through a lifesaving reorganization in 1902 when three prominent Reform Jews, Daniel Guggenheim, Jacob Schiff, and Leonard Lewison, gave the struggling trustees an opportunity to establish a "new" institution. The explicit mandate of this school was to offer regular rabbinic training in the English language, and to implement the methods and ideals of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*—literally, the scientific study of Judaism, an approach to the Jewish past pioneered in Germany by the 19th-century scholar Leopold Zunz. Religiously, this meant charting a course, to use the somewhat crude language of one of JTS's early supporters, "between stupid Orthodoxy and insane Reform."

To head the newly reorganized seminary and center of academic learning its benefactors recruited Solomon Schechter, the preeminent Jewish scholar in the English-speaking world. Born in Romania and possessed of a dramatic swagger and a no less dramatic countenance, Schechter was brought to New York from Cambridge, England, where he had established his credentials by rediscovering a cache of invaluable literary fragments that had lain for centuries in a Cairo *genizah*, or storage closet; publication of this treasure trove opened a window on some 500 years of Jewish history and experience. As president, Schechter was to put the Seminary on the academic map. Over the course of his tenure he hired some of its greatest faculty members—including Louis Ginzberg, Alexander Marx, and Mordechai M. Kaplan—moved the school from a crowded downtown brownstone to more spacious quarters in Morningside Heights, and solidified JTS's long-term reputation for serious scholarship and rabbinic skill.

Indeed, the inescapable fact is that the existence of an independent Conservative movement in Judaism can be attributed more to Schechter than to any other individual. Though highly traditionalist in his own religious practice, he was distrusted by the Orthodox community because of his commitment to *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, and he returned the distrust with interest. But he was no less quick to distinguish himself and his Seminary from Hebrew Union College and Reform: "at the bottom

* *Tradition Renewed: A History of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.* Vol. 1: *The Making of an Institution of Jewish Higher Learning*, 854 pp.; Vol. 2: *Beyond the Academy*, 872 pp. Jewish Theological Seminary, $100.00 for the set.

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of all the universalism and the prophetic Judaism," he once said, Reform was "nothing else but ham and a craving for assimilation." Schechter's chief obsession was "catholic Israel"—the eternal and universal community of the Jews. Planting himself firmly in the middle, he sought to raise up a corps of rabbis who would in turn offer the swelling ranks of American Jewry a way to hold on to their familiar religious traditions without cutting themselves off from secular modernity.

ALTHOUGH HE was the first and the most formative, Schechter was hardly the last in a gallery of brilliant figures who peopled JTS over the ensuing decades and turned it, faults and limitations notwithstanding, into a world center of Jewish learning. Pride of place on a long list should perhaps be given to two men: Saul Lieberman, an incomparable professor of Talmud who put his personal imprimatur on rabbinic studies at JTS from 1940 until his death in 1983, and Louis D. Finkelstein, who became JTS president (later chancellor) in 1938 and served with distinction until his retirement in 1972.

Scholarship *about* Judaism—sometimes dismissed as "popular scholarship"—is essential to the world's understanding of the Jews as well as to Jewish self-knowledge. But (in a distinction developed by Jonathan D. Sarna in his contribution to *Tradition Renewed*) there is another kind of scholarship that attempts to explain Judaism from *within* its basic textual corpus. Saul Lieberman's signal achievement lay in this latter area, and specifically in a stratum of rabbinic literature known as the Tosefta.

Briefly, the central text of rabbinic Judaism is the Mishnah, a code of law redacted in the early 3rd century of the Common Era; the Mishnah together with its running commentary, the Gemara, constitutes the Talmud. But there exists a parallel text to the Mishnah, composed more or less contemporaneously; in it are many similar or parallel passages, others that reflect fascinating differences, and still others that are without parallel at all. This is the Tosefta, and until Lieberman, it had not been presented to the world in any comprehensive fashion since the 16th century. Lieberman's critical, annotated edition of the Tosefta, published in the 1960's and 70's, was a titanic scholarly accomplishment that serves today as the basis of all modern analysis of the Mishnah and its universe.

That Lieberman was a peerless scholar was a fact universally acknowledged at the Seminary, and the honor of studying with him was duly prized. But he was something less than a beloved figure. As generations of students and colleagues have testified, Lieberman was notoriously impatient when it came to almost any matter not directly involved with rabbinic scholarship, and he was also openly disdainful of congregational rabbis who were not themselves productive scholars (his term for them was "nursemaids"). As the dominant faculty presence at JTS for 50 years, Lieberman was thus responsible for producing scores of Conservative rabbis who were intellectually overqualified and psychologically demoralized, hardly a net boon either to scholarship or to their congregants.

Lieberman's privileged position at JTS was made possible politically by Louis Finkelstein, who protected him from many routine faculty responsibilities and nurtured both his scholarship and his ego. A solid scholar in his own right, Finkelstein was an especially gifted administrator—in the words of an essay by Michael B. Greenbaum in *Tradition Renewed*, "a shrewd and skilled politician who achieved much of what he set out to accomplish."

By the time of Finkelstein's retirement in 1972, his best years were long behind him and the Seminary had unfortunately fallen into sad shape. But during the decades when he was functioning at his peak, Finkelstein fostered an intellectual atmosphere that could permit the simultaneous presence at JTS of such disparate spirits as the ultra-rationalist Lieberman and the mystical-leaning Abraham Joshua Heschel. Finkelstein also had a passion for transmitting Jewish scholarship to the uneducated, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, and in his pursuit of that passion, through books and the various arts of public relations, he succeeded in making JTS and Conservative Judaism a real cultural presence in mid-century American religious life.

ACADEMICALLY, THE years after Lieberman and Finkelstein—the 70's and 80's—were fallow, though the long-term effects of initiatives put into place by Finkelstein's successor, Gerson D. Cohen, have lately begun to pay off in improved standards and a lively and serious Ph.D. program. But the vicissitudes of the academic program are only part of the story told in *Tradition Renewed*. Another large part has to do with the relation of JTS to the Conservative movement at large, to its congregations and its rabbis.

That relation has not always been close or even especially cordial. Indeed, the role of the Seminary vis-à-vis the movement and its desires lay at the heart of the debate over the ordination of women in the late 1970's and early 80's, a subject treated by

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Beth S. Wenger in what is perhaps the finest single chapter in *Tradition Renewed.*

The then-chancellor, Gerson Cohen, saw JTS as inevitably dependent upon the movement, and therefore bound to be sensitive to the drift of opinion and attitudes within the Conservative laity—a laity just then being roiled, along with the rest of America, by the demands of feminism. As against this, the Seminary's lay chairman, Alan M. Strook, a prominent New York lawyer, ironically enough took the more "conservative" position, arguing that "the [Conservative] movement is an arm of the Seminary" and that in its decision-making procedures JTS should stand apart from whatever issues happened to be agitating the laity at any moment.

Cohen, himself a brilliant historian and a genuine intellectual, prevailed in the argument, and in 1983 the Seminary faculty voted to ordain women—a historic decision with substantial consequences for the future direction of the movement. Indeed, if Reform's *treifa* banquet could be seen as the event that gave birth a century earlier to Conservatism's much more normative and traditionalist response to the challenge of modernity, the 1983 decision to ordain women, though hardly regarded that way at the time, may come to be perceived as marking a no less fateful reversal of course.

One immediate price paid for the decision was the disaffection of a number of key Seminary leaders and scholars, the most distinguished of whom was the talmudist David Weiss-Halivni. Another faculty member opposed to the decision, David Novak, became active in an effort to establish a right-wing breakaway from Conservatism, complete with its own seminary and rabbinical association. Though this new movement, called the Union for Traditional Judaism, has never really taken off, the loss of these figures and others robbed JTS of the substantial weight of its own internal conservative ballast, causing what can only be described as a continuous tilt and drift to the Left over the last fifteen years.

Today, the most obvious symptom of this drift is the alliance that has been forged between the Conservative and Reform movements in this country to oppose state-sponsored Orthodoxy in Israel. This alliance obscures the very real doctrinal differences that still separate the two non-Orthodox movements, and to some concerned observers it has tainted the integrity of Conservatism by implicitly associating it with the more antinomian tendencies of Reform. They point in particular to Reform's unilateral decision to overthrow matrilineal descent as the sole determinant of an individual's Jewish identity; its apparent tolerance of intermarriage; its official embrace of homosexuality through the ordination of avowed gays and lesbians as rabbis; and its now widely anticipated designation of homosexual "marriages" as sanctified unions.

Despite these concerns, however, the bond between the two movements remains secure, and may actually be symptomatic of things to come. Many people now reasonably expect that, as was already the case with the ordination of women rabbis, JTS and the Conservative movement will eventually follow the path currently being blazed by Reform in a whole host of areas; all that will be required is the lag of a few years for decency's sake. The ground, at any rate, is being prepared: one important Conservative spokesman, Elliot N. Dorff, rector of the University of Judaism in Los Angeles (the Seminary's West Coast school) and vice chairman of the Seminary's committee on Jewish law and standards, has already called upon his movement to recognize homosexual marriage and, on all issues involving women, to adapt Jewish law to reigning cultural custom.

ON SOCIAL and cultural issues, then, the tilt of Conservatism's slope is away from the norms of law and tradition and toward the permissive; and the slope is a slippery one. To complicate matters still further, another and in some ways more surprising trend is occurring within Reform—this time, however, not on the social or cultural front, where Reform largely remains a card-carrying devotee of "progressive" American practice, but on the front of ritual observance. Together, the two trends may push the movements into even closer conjunction.

A new platform to be considered by Reform rabbis in 1999, of which a draft is now in circulation, embraces traditional Jewish observance in language that would be all but unrecognizable to the movement's leading figures a generation ago, let alone a century ago. Calling for a "balance" between "our individual authority" and "our membership in the community of the Jewish people," the draft Reform platform proclaims "Torah" as "our center" and Judaism as "the scale by which we shall judge the modern world." Long-neglected or rejected obligations such as Sabbath-observance, *kashrut*, the wearing of *tallit* (prayer shawl) and *tefillin* (phylacteries) in prayer, even immersion in a ritual bath ("for periodic experiences of purification") are heralded as appropriate manifestations of Reform religiosity, along with day-school education, Hebrew (a "Holy Tongue"), and immigration to Israel.

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What this document suggests is that even as Conservatism is moving Left to meet the Reform position on matters like gay rights, Reform may be moving Right to meet Conservatism on ritual matters like Sabbath and prayer (while embellishing these practices with New Age accretions like aura-gazing). Other signs of such convergence include not only the Reform-Conservative alliance opposing Israel's Orthodox rabbinic monopoly but also a new "track" at the Conservative movement's University of Judaism that combines a left-wing, California-oriented social perspective with a proclaimed commitment to authenticity in religious praxis.

Assuming things continue along this trajectory, what will become of JTS? Although the future is difficult to foresee, once again the past may hold some instructive wisdom.

When Solomon Schechter arrived in America in 1902, Cincinnati's Hebrew Union College was emerging from an interim period following the death two years earlier of Isaac Mayer Wise. Interestingly enough, at the time Wise first established HUC in 1875, he intended it to be a center *without* (theoretically) a denominational focus. Indeed, this had been his original dream for the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Central Conference of American Rabbis, both established by Wise as umbrella organizations for a nascent non-Orthodox American Jewish community and only later to become the main arms of Reform Judaism. Given this history, it was not altogether anomalous for the *American Hebrew*, the leading New York Jewish newspaper of its day, to sponsor a symposium in 1900 on the proposition that HUC and JTS merge into a single, unitary institution.

In this, the earliest phase of their existence, HUC and JTS were in fact often linked in their approach. Their rabbinic curricula were remarkably similar, and several faculty members were "shared" between them without apparent doctrinal conflict. In its own early literature, JTS referred to itself as the "Eastern Seminary," the clear implication being that geography separated the two campuses more than ideology.

The thinking of the men who brought Schechter to America was not altogether dissimilar. As Mel Scult observes in his essay in *Tradition Renewed*, both Jacob Schiff, a prominent member of Temple Emanu-El of New York (Reform), and his fellow philanthropist Louis Marshall rejected "denominationalism and . . . put their faith in one comprehensive Jewish community":

> Marshall's sense that there should be "one Judaism" in the United States and Schiff's belief that the Seminary was to produce devout rabbis "irrespective of the tendencies toward which they might be leaning" makes it clear that the donors intended the Seminary to be nondenominational and the sole producer of English-speaking rabbis for the American Jewish community.

Even at a much later point in the Seminary's history, when the lines had hardened, Louis Finkelstein spoke of the virtues of a nondenominational rabbinical school, one that "might reach out to all Jews" and "be a force for reconciliation and unity." And so in his time did Gerson Cohen. "No Jewish community in all of history since the destruction of the Temple," Cohen wrote, "has been creative and vigorous without *an academy* that functioned as the integrative symbol of Jewish community life."

MAY THE time then come to think what is presently unthinkable? JTS is an institution in search of an ideology, and the Conservative movement atop which it sits has reached a demographic plateau. Its population pool is spilling away, first into Reform, and from there into the moral vacuum of secular America. As for Reform, it has institutional problems of its own. HUC is now in the early phase of a reorganization. Financially the college is dependent upon a guaranteed percentage of congregational dues, but many congregations have begun to complain loudly about the burden, and the continued viability of HUC's four-campus structure (Cincinnati, New York, Los Angeles, and Jerusalem) may soon be in serious jeopardy.

Moreover, the landscape is now dotted with other institutions producing non-Orthodox rabbis for a Jewish public moving into a post-denominational phase. These include the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in Philadelphia (the equivalent in rabbinic education of a school of osteopathic medicine) and the Academy for Jewish Religion in New York (the equivalent of an offshore medical school), both unable so far to achieve a status equal to that of JTS or HUC but each more than a blip on the screen. To these must also be added the phenomenon known as "private ordination," a practice taken from older models but long since abandoned for more highly structured forms of accreditation.

Today there are rabbis across the country who have been ordained by three other cooperating rabbis working with standards established by and for themselves. The usual justification for this procedure, as well as for the proliferation of non-

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"mainstream" seminaries, is that the mainstream schools are too narrow and authoritarian, and that their singular power needs to be checked by more "democratic" mechanisms. The anti-establishment mood is not a passing one, and may become more significant as increasing numbers of congregations, puzzled by what many already regard as mere peculiarities of outmoded doctrinal divisions, begin asking why institutional and "movement" affiliation should matter.

Reorganization and consolidation are facts of life in the corporate world. Such actions are either carefully planned or taken in the midst of panic and compulsion. As far as non-Orthodox American Jewish leaders are concerned, the challenge of the next century will be to arrest the course of atrophy and fragmentation that threatens to leave the center unguarded and ultimately empty. In the face of such drift, JTS and HUC may increasingly come to take on the aspect of dinosaurs, unable to adapt and hence slated for extinction. Might Gerson Cohen's observation—that every significant Jewish community has been marked by a single institutional fount of intellectual creativity and rabbinic training—prompt a new look at an old idea?

If so, that would still leave open the question of whether even the creation of one large tent can restore any true sense of normativeness to what will remain of religiously-affiliated, non-Orthodox American Jewry. Here, as we have seen, the prospect is quite gray. To judge by present and evolving models, the thoroughly eclectic, not to say syncretistic, nature of the Judaism likely to be practiced under such a tent is hardly calculated to bring comfort to the hearts of traditionalists, Conservative or any other kind. Picture, for example, a religious ceremony sanctifying the union of two homosexual men, one of them non-Jewish, conducted in Hebrew and presided over by a lesbian rabbi who earlier in the day has donned prayer shawl and phylacteries to perform devotions that include meditating to the rhythm of a dumbek as well as reciting each of the prescribed ancient benedictions addressed to the God of Israel.

Of course, the future could surprise us all and produce a wholly different set of permutations—through the interaction, say, of a growing modern Orthodoxy, a truly conservatizing trend within Conservatism, and the reorganization of the traditionalist elements within Reform. Of this, however, neither the history contained in *Tradition Renewed* nor any large current trend gives much hope.

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The War Against Testing

David W. Murray

It is safe to say that Thomas Jefferson never took a standardized test, and would probably consider them hopelessly inadequate as measures of what an educated person should know. Yet Jefferson, in his way, was the inspiration behind our present vast apparatus for assessing academic aptitude and achievement. Looking toward America's future, he imagined an educational system that would seek young people from "every condition of life," students of "virtue and talents" who would someday form a "natural aristocracy" to replace the old-fashioned kind based on wealth and family background.

The U.S. of course has never fully achieved this ideal. But particularly in the period after World War II, as ever larger numbers of Americans entered colleges and universities, Jefferson's educational vision did begin to appear closer than ever to being realized. To an extent unimaginable a few generations earlier, access to American universities, and especially the elite ones, became based on considerations of merit. The chief instrument of this transformation was the standardized test—mass-administered, machine-scored, and utterly indifferent to every characteristic of a student save his ability to get the answers right.

And yet, for all its obvious benefits in helping to identify Jefferson's "natural aristocracy," and for all its widespread acceptance—this year, the Educational Testing Service (ETS), the organization that does the bulk of such evaluation, will administer its tests to some nine million students—the enterprise of testing has never been free from criticism. Today, in fact, its critics are more numerous and more vociferous than ever.

Indignant over the recent drop in minority enrollment at some state universities as a result of bans on affirmative action, the foes of standardized assessment argue with bitterness that America's vaunted meritocracy has never served all its citizens equally well. As they see it, moreover, the real issue is not the abilities of the test-takers, minority or otherwise. Rather, it is the tests themselves, and the unreasonable emphasis placed on them by the gatekeepers of American higher education.

The oldest and most familiar accusation against standardized tests is that they are discriminatory. As the advocacy group FairTest puts it, a seemingly objective act, namely, "filling in little bubbles" with a No. 2 pencil, conceals a process that is "racially, culturally, and sexually biased."

The prime evidence for this charge is the test results themselves. For many years now, the median score for blacks on the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) has fallen 200 points short of that for whites (on a scale of 400 to 1600, divided equally between math and verbal skills). Less dramatic, but no less upsetting to groups like the Center for Women's

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Policy Studies, has been the persistent 35-point gender gap in scores on the math section of the SAT.

The SAT produces such disparate results, say critics, because its very substance favors certain kinds of students over others. Thus, fully comprehending a reading selection might depend on background knowledge naturally available to an upper-middle-class white student (by virtue, say, of foreign travel or exposure to the performing arts) but just as naturally unavailable to a lower-class black student from the ghetto. The education writer Peter Sacks calls this the "Volvo effect," and has offered for proof an ETS study according to which, within certain income brackets, the difference between the test scores of white and black students disappears.

At the same time, women are said to be put at a disadvantage by the multiple-choice format itself. Singled out for blame are math questions that emphasize abstract reasoning and verbal exercises based on selecting antonyms, both of which supposedly favor masculine modes of thought. "[F]emales process and express knowledge differently, and more subtly," explains FairTest's Robert Schaeffer. "They look for nuances, shades of gray, different angles."

In fact, so biased are the tests, according to their opponents, that they fail to perform even the limited function claimed for them: forecasting future grades. The SAT, says Peter Sacks, consistently "underpredicts" the college marks of both women and minorities, which hardly inspires confidence in its ability to measure the skills it purports to identify. As for the Graduate Record Exam (GRE), required by most academic graduate programs, a recent study of 5,000 students found that their scores told us almost nothing, beyond what we might already know from their grades, about how they would perform in graduate school.

Another line of attack against the tests grants their accuracy in measuring certain academic skills but challenges the notion that these are the skills most worth having. High test scores, opponents insist, reveal little more than a talent for—taking tests. According to a 1994 study by the National Association of School Psychologists, students who do well on the SAT tend to think by "rote" and to favor a "surface approach" to schoolwork. Low scorers, by contrast, are more likely to delve into material, valuing "learning for its own sake."

It is likewise contended that no mere standardized test can capture the qualities that translate into real-world achievement. Thus, when it emerged last year that American children ranked dead last among the major industrial nations in the Third International Mathematics and Science Study, the Harvard education expert Howard Gardner declared himself unconcerned. The tests, after all, "don't measure whether students can think," just their exposure to "the lowest common denominator of facts and skills." Besides, Gardner observed, at a time when America enjoys unrivaled prosperity, what could be more obvious than that "high scores on these tests . . . aren't crucial to our economic success"?

In a similar vein, the social commentator Nicholas Lemann has called for a reassessment of what we mean by meritocracy. Our current view of it, he argued recently in the *New York Times*, is "badly warped." If universities are to regain the "moral and public dimensions" that once connected them to the wider society, instead of being mere instruments for "distributing money and prestige," they should begin to select not those students who excel on standardized tests but those with the skills necessary to lead "a good, decent life."

This varied chorus of critics has already won some significant concessions from the current testing regime. For one thing, ETS, faced with both adverse publicity and threats of legal action by activists and the U.S. Department of Education, has tried to remedy differences in group performance. On the Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test (PSAT), which is used for choosing National Merit Scholars, a new method of scoring was recently introduced in the hope that more women might garner the prestigious award. The old formula, which assigned equal weight to the math and verbal sections of the test, was replaced by an index in which the verbal score, usually the higher one for female test-takers, was doubled. The point, as a prominent testing official put it, was "to help girls catch up."

More widely publicized was the massive "recentering" of SAT scores that went into effect with the 1996 results. Though the declared aim of ETS was a technical one—to create a better distribution of scores clustered around the test's numerical midpoint—the practical effect was a windfall for students in almost every range. A test-taker who previously would have received an excellent score of 730 out of 800 on the verbal section, for example, is now granted a "perfect" 800, while the average scores for groups like blacks and Hispanics have received a considerable boost.

But since neither "recentering" nor any other

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such device has succeeded in eliminating disparities in scores, opponents of tests have had to look elsewhere. At universities themselves, affirmative action has long been the tool of choice for remedying the alleged biases of tests. With racial preferences now under siege, economic disadvantage is being talked about as a new compensating factor that may help shore up the numbers of minority students. The law school at the University of California at Berkeley, for instance, has introduced a selection system that will consider a "coefficient of social disadvantage" in ranking applicants.

Some schools go farther, hoping simply to do away with standardized tests altogether. There are, they insist, other, less problematic indicators of student merit. High-school grades are a starting point, but no less important are essays, interviews, and work portfolios that offer a window into personal traits no standardized test can reveal.

Bates College in Maine, like several other small liberal-arts schools, has already stopped requiring applicants to take the SAT. According to the college's vice president, William Hiss, standardized scores are far less meaningful than "evidence of real intelligence, real drive, real creative abilities, real cultural sensitivities." These qualities, moreover, are said to be especially prominent in the applications of minority students, whose numbers at the school have indeed shot upward since the change in policy.

TAKEN AS a whole, the campaign currently being mounted against standardized testing constitutes a formidable challenge to what was once seen as the fairest means of identifying and ranking scholastic merit. Since that campaign shows every sign of intensifying in the years ahead, it may be relevant to point out that every major premise on which it rests is false.

In the first place, the SAT and GRE are hardly the meaningless academic snapshots described by their critics. Results from these tests have been shown to correspond with those on a whole range of other measures and outcomes, including IQ tests, the National Assessment of Educational Progress, and the National Educational Longitudinal Study. Though each of these uses a different format and has a somewhat different aim, a high degree of correlation obtains among all of them.

This holds true for racial and ethnic groups as well. Far from being idiosyncratic, the scoring patterns of whites, blacks, Hispanics, and Asians on the SAT and GRE are replicated on other tests as well. It was in light of just such facts that the National Academy of Science concluded in the 1980's that the most commonly used standardized tests display no evidence whatsoever of cultural bias.

Nor do the tests fail to predict how minority students will ultimately perform in the classroom. If, indeed, the purported bias in the tests were real, such students would earn better grades in college than what is suggested by their SAT scores; but that is not the case. As Keith Widaman, a psychologist at the University of California, showed in a recent study, the SAT actually *over*estimates the first-year grades of blacks and Hispanics in the UC system.

Foes of testing are a bit closer to the mark when they claim that women end up doing better in college than their scores would indicate. But the "underprediction" is very slight—a tenth of a grade point on the four-point scale—and only applies to less demanding schools. For more selective institutions, the SAT predicts the grades of both sexes quite accurately.

As for the claim that test scores depend heavily on income, the facts again tell us otherwise. Though one can always point to exceptions, students who are not of the same race but whose families earn alike tend, on average, to perform very differently. A California study found, for example, that even among families with annual incomes over $70,000, blacks still fell short in median SAT scores, trailing Hispanics by 79 points, whites by 148 points, and Asians by 193 points.

This suggests that universities turning to economic disadvantage as a surrogate for racial preferences will be disappointed with the results. And this has already proved to be the case. When the University of Texas medical school mounted such an effort, it found that most of its minority applicants did not qualify for admission, coming as they did from fairly comfortable circumstances but still failing to match the academic credentials of less-well-off whites and others. In fact, as a University of California task force concluded last year, so-called economic affirmative action, by opening the door to poor but relatively high-scoring whites and Asians, might actually *hurt* the prospects of middle-class blacks and Hispanics.

WHAT ABOUT relying less on tests and more on other measuring rods like high-school grades? Unfortunately, as everyone knows, high schools across the country vary considerably, not only in their resources but in the demands they make of students. An A- from suburban Virginia's elite Thomas Jefferson High School of Science and

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Technology cannot be ranked with an A- from a school in rural Idaho or inner-city Newark, especially at a time of rampant grade inflation aimed at bolstering "self-esteem." It was precisely to address this problem that a single nationwide test was introduced in the first place.

Nor is it even clear that relying more exclusively on grades would bump up the enrollment numbers of blacks and Hispanics, as many seem to think. While it is true that more minority students would thereby become eligible for admission, so would other students whose grade-point averages (GPA's) outstripped their test scores. A state commission in California, considering the adoption of such a scheme, discovered that in order to pick students from this larger pool for the limited number of places in the state university system, the schools would have to raise their GPA cut-off point. As a result, the percentage of eligible Hispanics would have remained the same, and black eligibility actually would have dropped.

In Texas, vast disparities in preparation have already damped enthusiasm for a much-publicized "top-10-percent" plan under which the highest-ranking tenth of graduates from any Texas high school win automatic admission to the state campus of their choice, regardless of their test scores. Passed in the wake of the 1996 *Hopwood* case (1996), which scuttled the state university's affirmative-action program, the plan has forced many high schools to discourage their students from getting in over their heads when choosing a college. As one guidance counselor quoted in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* warned her top seniors, "You may be sitting in a classroom where the majority of students have demonstrated . . . higher-order thinking skills that are beyond what you have. You'll have to struggle."

Grades aside, what of the various less measurable signs of student potential? Should not a sterling character or artistic sensitivity count for something? What of special obstacles overcome?

Certainly, such things should count, and always have counted—more so today than ever, to judge by the sorts of questions most schools currently ask of applicants. But gaining a fuller picture of a particular student's promise is a difficult business, especially in an admissions process that very often involves sorting through thousands of individuals. Moreover, it can only go so far before it ceases to have anything to do with education. What a student is like outside the classroom is surely significant, but until we are prepared to say outright that the heart of the matter is something other than fitness for academic work, a crucial gauge of whether a student is going to be able to pass a biology final or write a political-science research paper will remain that old, much-maligned SAT score.

There are, to be fair, social commentators who acknowledge this ineluctable fact, and who therefore urge us to direct all our remedial efforts toward improving the test scores of American blacks.* But for the true opponents of testing, such efforts—the work of generations—are clearly beside the point. Basically, what these critics are hoping to do is to achieve the ends of affirmative action by other, more politic means.

Hence the search for supposedly more "nuanced" measures of scholastic merit like "creativity" and "leadership," tacitly understood as stand-ins for skin color. But there is no reason to think that minority students possess these qualities in greater abundance than do their peers. The attempt to substitute them for test scores will thus only perpetuate the corrupt logic of affirmative action by piling deception upon deception.

Whatever the euphemism used to describe it, only counting by race and gender can produce the result that will satisfy the most determined critics of standardized testing. If they have their way, and such testing wholly or partly disappears, we will have forfeited our best and most objective means of knowing how our schools are doing, as well as any clear set of standards by which students themselves can judge their own progress. On that day, America's astonishingly successful experiment in educational meritocracy will have come to an end. How this will benefit the poor and disadvantaged among us, or help them get ahead, is anybody's guess.

* See "America's Next Achievement Test" by Christopher Jencks and Meredith Phillips in the September-October *American Prospect.*

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Girl Trouble

A Story

David Gelernter

CHARGED UP with high-voltage anger, Rabbi Steven Eskanazzi covers twenty-odd Manhattan blocks in nine minutes. He wants the anger full-strength, doesn't want to lose any piece of it by putting it into words. He keeps an empty phrase going in his head: something must be done. *Something must be done.* A Jewish girl—same age as Steven, they've known each other for years—falls in love with a German; okay, that can happen. Then goes around flaunting the German in public, advertising her obsequious in-loveness; disgusting.

He descends the concrete face of the warm, dirty city from his building in the mid-Eighties to Jackie's on Sixty-fourth near Columbus Avenue as if he were shinnying down a rope: the forward pull is automatic and it takes energy to hold himself back, waiting for traffic at the corners. He jangles the coins in his pockets as the yellow Checker cabs pass before him, the Volkswagen Rabbits, the long Cadillacs escaped from the 60's. He threads his way across the expanse of Seventy-second amid the hot heaving buses, reading unintentionally the advertisements on their sides.

It's April 13, 1978; *something must be done.* He reaches the medium-sized, faded-yellow apartment house, goes in and examines the panel in the front lobby. J Bloch, 6K. Pushes the button. He's panting and his throat is hot and raw. A harsh buzz (the building's mocking vulgar response) and the door unlatches. Through the main lobby with its smell of dim-brownness and furniture polish to the creaky-old-man elevator for a slow ride up to six. He rings her doorbell.

"Well hell-*o*, do come in, what a truly *gigantic* pleasure." As the door clicks shut he's in a living room all in oatmeal (the shag rug, the two small facing sofas) with a framed poster, mainly purple, advertising the Joffrey Ballet, and the oatmeal curtains closed. Something's wrong. The blood comes prickling to his face. He looks up and away.

"Why don't you put something on?"

She's wearing what would appear to be a man's shirt, and that's all. Sleeves rolled up, top buttons open. The biggest problem is her right leg sloping toward him as she stands with hips cocked, causing the universe to drain downward through some sort of hole in his mind, sand through a funnel.

"Why don't you drop dead? Did I invite you?" Her every move causes him another jolt. He falls back a step and then another, moving along the wall toward the corner. "And now you're gonna tell me how to *dress*? What are you, king of the world? Do I tell *you* how to dress?—not that you couldn't use a

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little help." Lowered insinuating eyes, teasing. "Would you like a few suggestions? Soft, sweet, and sexy, that's the look—pink silk. Beige and gold. Calvin Klein." He steps back again as she comes forward, then looks her in the face and talks fast.

"Is modesty too much to expect from a grown Jewish woman? Or any woman?"

Oh, expletive modesty, she says. "I don't happen to be a modest person." And steps toward him again, causing another internal shimmering shudder like a cascade of wind chimes in a breeze. "And by the way, you aren't, either—we're a lot closer than you think, I mean, a *lot*." Another step, and she bursts out giggling as he retreats into the corner and says, "*Stop it!*"

"We're a lot closer than you'd ever dream," ignoring him. "I've got cooties, right? You can't touch me, right?" The musical giggle—hands clasped behind her back, she advances again and stops inches away to look up at him. He's slight but she's smaller. He can smell the laundered cleanness of her shirt, her fragrant black hair. He can follow the quivering up-and-down of the improbable pendant on a chain as she breathes—an intricate dark-gold locket, antique-looking. The thigh-grazing hem of the shirt rises as she gathers a bunch of hair and lets it feather back into place. Acuteness of the bend at her elbow and again at the wrist. "But then of course *you* are the most arrogant stuck-up person I ever met, and that's got something to do with modesty too, don't you think? Mister big-shot who barges into girls' apartments and tells 'em how to dress? Mister modesty police? Don't you think?"

ALTHOUGH HE is a rabbi and an Orthodox Jew he has never (in fact) taken seriously the risk of incurring ritual uncleanness when you touch a woman. When you're unclean, you can always get clean again. Private sessions between unmarried persons of the opposite sex are themselves unlawful, but he has in mind the components out of which you could assemble a theological justification: states of emergency, obligations to prevent sin.

He steps past her, returning to the vicinity of the front door and resting his hand defensively on the frame, about to speak. "What can I do for you, Stevie?" Shaking her head at him with arms crossed, mock reproach. "What do you want to tell me, Stevie?" Shaping each word with her lips. Her energy is so high it drives her from mood to mood faster than he can follow.

"I only came for one reason," fighting for concentration. "Because you think that, whatever you do, no one's *ever* going to tell you no. No, you can't do it. No, you can't have it. No, that's not right. No one, *ever*, has ever told you no," gathering speed and resentment, "and that's why you're a spoiled brat in a *generation*, a whole generation of spoiled brats, in a whole country of spoiled brats. Lord help us when you grow up and take over, because the only word you've ever heard in your whole life is yes. So I'm telling you *no*. I'm here to tell you no. Your behavior stinks. Your behavior with Klaus stinks. Your behavior is disgraceful. And good-bye, I'm leaving." Hand on the doorknob.

"Liar. You're lying, aren't you?" Quietly. "You're here because you want to grab me and make love."

"*Sex*, you think sex—"

"But you're too scared to admit it, including to yourself."

"Sex, you think, is the only thing in the world, don't you?"

"It's the only thing on *your* mind anyway, right at the moment."

"Sure, fine, sure, I'm a human being, I'm a man, but life doesn't reduce to hormones." She's approaching again, graceful, toe-out ballet steps, step and pause, step and pause, working hard to keep from laughing.

"How would *you* know?" Another deliberate small step. "You don't know any more about it," step, "than a five-year-old, do you?" He's looking tensely around the room but stands his ground. "Do you? Huh? Do you? You're so transparent. It upsets you, doesn't it?"

"You want me to give in because you're irresistible. I *know* you are. It's true, you are. I'm still telling you no. No, get it? *No!* And I'm leaving."

"You are not."

"Stop it, stand still. *Stop it!*"

"Make me."

One instant before she plows into him he seizes her by the upper arms, holding her motionless with his own arms rigid and hard. She squirms, he holds on. "You're hurting me, you're doing it on purpose. You're enjoying it—every man is a sadist, go ahead, lie to me, tell me I'm wrong, tell me another lie. . . ." He is trying by the rigidity of his grasp not to feel her, or squeeze her arms—directing his thoughts to the heavy punching bag in his high-school gym, which must have weighed about what she does. It was covered in blue vinyl and patched with duct tape. Thick heavy vinyl. A mental effort so intense, her words register only after the fact: "Squeeze harder, hurt me, that's what you want, you don't have the guts—"

"*Yechhhhh*," his face screwed up, "you are *revolting*." He's pushed her away and she springs back

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and bursts out laughing, "You look just like a little kid when you say *yech*!"

"Why do you talk garbage?" He pulls the door open with a whoosh; the breeze bats them, the airless heavy smell of the hall.

"Garbage. You wish. You don't like it so it's garbage, 'cause you're too much of a coward to tell the truth."

"And every woman is a masochist, in your warped opinion?" His words pick up a hollowed-out sound from the hallway.

"Wouldn't you like to know."

"Good-bye and good luck."

"Coward. That's your motto: no. *No!*" She slams the door with a supple foot (her leg grazes his) and scoots around to lean against it. He backs off again. "That's perfect, you uptight self-righteous creepy male chauvinist pig, that's exactly, that's—"

"Spare me the—"

"The whole *country*."

"Spare me the clichés—"

"That's just what's wrong with it. You want to know? You want to know what'll happen when we *do* take over? I'll tell you what," low-volume screaming but with laughter running underneath, "instead of no there'll be *yes*, and people—"

"You're talking like a child—"

"Will be happy for once instead of all screwed up and terrified."

"An adult understands that you can't just romp in the field and run around screaming. Children, yes, hate to hear the word no," accelerating in a runway-rush to keep her quiet, "hate to find out there's more to life than having fun, hate for anyone to cramp their styles and tell them sorry, you can't have that, and all you're telling me is you want to be a child forever, that's *your* motto, and it's *pathetic*."

"PATHETIC? I'LL tell you pathetic. Pathetic is going crazy because you want to make love to a girl," only she puts it more concisely, "and she's standing right in front of you and you haven't got the basic elementary *guts*, that's pathetic. No to everything, that's pathetic, no to sex, no to freedom, no to grass, no to *liberation*. Yes to nuclear weapons, huh, right? Nuke 'em, right?"

"Who's talking about nuclear weapons?"

"That's your program—"

"You are *nuts*."

"That's it, yes to racism, and putting people down, and telling girls how to dress, that's *pathetic*, coward. And when we do take over, the world will be different." He's backing away again as (chest heaving) she approaches. "Because you'll be allowed, when there's something and you want to do it, and it doesn't hurt anybody, and the only reason *not* to do it is because of someone's stupid religion, or stupid laws, or stupid rules, then *you'll do it*, and the hell with all that uptight garbage, and people will be happy, and even *you*" (bopping him smartly on the head with a rolled-up *Time* she's grabbed off a sofa) "won't be able to stop them!" The *Travolta Fever* issue. "Coward!"

The idea flashes through him of running his hands up her sides. He shudders, tries to throw it off. ("He has raised discomania to a national craze," *Time* reports.) "Kindergarten society," he says. "Permanent kindergarten."

She hits him again. "Coward." And again. With a lunge he grabs her wrists, gathers them in his right hand and clamps tight as the magazine falls with a soft smack to the floor and she looks up at him and laughs, breathless; squirms hard, shoulders twisting, breasts moving inside the loose shirt. His heart punching.

"Okay, you got me." Subsiding; a quick flick of her head to toss stray hair off her face. "Go ahead, I'm listening, make me religious."

"Drop dead."

"Convince me God cares. I'm waiting. Convince me God cares what Steven Eskanazzi eats for breakfast. Little Stevie Eskanazzi. You eat bacon, you ruin His whole day—*right*?" With a yank on "right," she pulls free and on instinct he falls back and winces as she laughs at him, panting, pushing hair off her forehead. "Okay, I'm waiting, make me religious."

"I can't, won't talk about it, not possible, not decent and not right with a half-naked woman in front of me."

"Then do something about it!" Panted shout. "Has anyone ever told you how to be a man? Or only a *Jew*?" He's clutching his clipped-on *yarmulke* and the hair beneath it, scanning the room. "Do you know you're tearing your hair? It's sweet"—he thrusts his hands in his pockets—"I've never actually seen that before."

"I'd hit you if you weren't a girl, it would be a pleasure."

"Big strong man, hit me anyway. *You're* the girl." He has her wrists again and holds them before his face in his laced-together hands and just barely smiles. "All right, this is the whole Torah. . . ."

"Let go of me. This the first time you've smiled in twenty years?" She yanks backward but can't free herself. "*Let* . . . ," squirming. "Having fun, *rabbi*?"

He lets go and steps back quickly. "G'bye."

"Tell me, Stevie, please. Tell me." Instant change

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of tone as she slips once again between him and the door. She's two inches away, whispering sweetly. "Tell me. Please? I'm a human being, too. Really, I'm a human being, too." Delicately pushing another hair back in place. He winces again and turns away: the cascading shudder, the wind chimes, the avalanche. "Girls are human beings. Even if you can see their legs, they still are. I know it's hard to grasp. I can understand English. Honestly. I know you think I'm a twit. . . ."

"I don't."

"You do."

"Okay, I do."

"Tell me, please?"

HE PULLS the front door open again, another sucking whoosh, forcing her to step nimbly aside—and pauses with his hand on the knob.

"Here is the whole Torah. Try saying no to yourself for once. Consider that you might be wrong. If you take care of your family, the rest of the world will take care of itself. I said *if*. And the rest is commentary. And goodbye."

"I don't think I get it. Explain it again."

"You want to understand religion? I'm giving a talk in a synagogue five minutes from here this Saturday morning. Beit Shlomo. For your sake I'll rewrite the whole thing. You want to know about religion, show up and listen, be my guest."

"I'll be there. Yes, I'm coming. I'll be there. Don't give me that like *totally astonished* look. I'm a human being, I can go places, I can understand lectures, and if Libbie is so damned crazy about you, why doesn't *she* go hear you? 'Cause she's too damned scared to go. She's scared to breathe. She's scared of her own face. You both think I'm scum, that I'm a twit and scum, but what you are is cowards."

"Don't talk to me about your cousin. You aren't even fit to say her name, if you want to know the truth."

"Are you in love with her, too? Or just me?"

He's out the door and smacks the elevator-call button (across the hall and one door down). It rolls majestically open—just where he left it. She's put her head out and sings mockingly into the flat hollowness of the hall: "*Ogni donna mi fa palpitar—un desio ch'io non posso spiegar, un desio. . . .*"

He stops halfway into the elevator, listening tensely, facing away. The door starts to close, nuzzles him and retreats. "It amazes you, doesn't it—a twit like *me* singing Mozart. My voice isn't bad, is it? Not that you'd know the difference. I studied singing; but you're the one who has no idea *what* I'm singing. I'm the twit, but you're the one who knows zero." He stands frozen, the door nuzzles him again. "Every lady," singing and taunting, "makes me palpitate—a desire I can't explain. . . ." He steps in without looking back, smashes the "L" button and hears her "See you Saturday!" as the door closes. Riding down, he says out loud, "I think I lost."

In the empty lobby he stops still and stares at his feet. What is this? A hurricane roaring around inside him. He pushes out the door and walks uptown as fast as if something were chasing him. The quivering pendant. Her astonishing narrowness as he held her and she squirmed. The bend of her elbow and her wrist. Dodging uptown through the basso honks, barks, and mutterings of the city, the occasional hollow shriek of a cab rounding a corner, carrying his burden of confusion like a tottering stack of packages in his arms, cutting him off from the world—awkward, conspicuous, wholly self-absorbed.

"I THOUGHT," he tells his roommate Rafi soon afterward, "boy meets girl, it's supposed to be like, what, romantic or something. In fact it's a wind tunnel, it's like walking across the Long Island Expressway."

Rafi is sitting in his bathrobe at the kitchen table with tea and a volume of the Talmud and his portable radio tuned to news. John Wayne is seventy, feels fine. Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis and Joan Mondale want to save Grand Central Station. John Mitchell is out of jail on furlough for medical treatment. Ehrlichman to be released soon. Patty Hearst freed temporarily, pending appeal; fourteen months to serve. The nation is still cleaning up after the 60's—absent-mindedly, in a daze. Bianca Jagger is doing something, and so is Margaux Hemingway, and so is Amy Carter, age ten.

"A *wind tunnel*. I thought in some sense the male was supposed to be the stronger party. So why am I shaking like a leaf?"

Rafi switches off the radio and glances up. "You're not."

"I was." Standing at the sink with an empty glass in one hand and his other on the faucet, stiff and staring. "What the hell? What the hell is this?"

Rafi had been worried about the meeting, but it hadn't lasted long and it was clear (though Steven sounded strange—a musical instrument out of range, tense and pale) that nothing had happened. "Lust is strong. So what else is new?" He quotes from the Mishnah in Hebrew: "Who is powerful? He who masters his sex-drive."

"Something *is* new."

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"*Ma she'hayah, hu she'yihyeh.*" Ecclesiastes: what has been, shall be. He continues in Hebrew, "and what has been done shall be done. And there is nothing new under the sun."

"Something *is* new."

"Tell me another one."

A few minutes later Steven says, "I'm not denying she's beautiful."

"Oh. Who asked you to?" Rafi closes the Talmud, kisses it, and tucks it under his arm. "I'm going to sleep."

"You think," motionless over the sink, one hand still resting on the faucet, "that it's possible Libbie Bloch is, quote, crazy about me?"

"I don't know. Really wouldn't know. She's a nice girl, you're a nice guy, why not?" Pause, standing. "Is this a trick question?"

Another pause. "She's not *frum*." Isn't Orthodox, doesn't keep kosher.

"Which girl are we talking about anyway? *Who's* beautiful?"

Steven doesn't hear. Rafi returns ten minutes later to go through a pile of magazines on the floor, Steven sitting at the table now with a glass of water. "In ten minutes," says Rafi, "you made it from the sink to the table. Huh." Working through the magazines. "Drink your water. C'mon. Drink it."

Steven needs quantities of water for his health. Kidney disease kept him out of the Army during Vietnam. "You know why people behave right, do *mitzvos*, act in the correct way? Habit. Just habit. *Mitzvah goreres mitzvah*." One good act induces another. "If I'd ever attacked a girl before, I would have attacked another girl tonight. The only reason I didn't is, I never had. I had my record to protect. Or something. I think." Trailing off.

"That's a nice explanation," says Rafi, "a nice explanation for why people act good, except it neglects one minor little thing, that some people act good because they *are* good."

"I wouldn't know about that." Silence. Then he adds, "I guess Libbie Bloch is good."

MISS ELISABETH BLOCH, startled out of near-sleep by her bedside phone, groggily picks up. "What do you wear to synagogue on a Saturday morning?"

"Jackie?"

"Expert advice, the straight scoop. My guess is, the slit skirts won't fly. Correct? That's just like my—y'know—female intuition."

Libbie is lying on top of her bedspread and it's 10:45 P.M. She had been watching her thoughts wheel and tumble near the ceiling like winged *putti* in a luminous Titian haze. Thoughts about Steven, originally. Roughly an hour ago, on the telephone, she'd had her first-ever intimate conversation with him; at least, intimate sort-of, in a manner of speaking. Then he'd set out on a mission to her cousin Jackie that she considered extremely dangerous. But soon after, the glow of their conversation had returned. The small suburban bedroom, her childhood bedroom gone rose-and-golden in the dim warm light of her bedside lamp—the pink flowers studding the wallpaper turned it into a jewel box and she was inside, and then she was walking on some sort of balcony looking down into a large bright noisy room full of flowers, except that she had to go because she needed a cab, and then the phone rang. "What are you talking about?"

"Gee, what *am* I talking about? What's so complicated? Did I wake you, I'm sorry. I just want to know. I'm going to synagogue Saturday morning to hear Stevie give a lecture. Or something. Some kind of speech. You ought to be, like, falling on the floor with happiness, right? I'm going to *synagogue*. Me? The girl who hasn't been inside one since she was six? I think—something like *six*."

Silence.

"You want him, why don't you go *get* him?"

Silence.

"It's not like I haven't always *known* you wanted him. Obviously you've followed him around like a puppy-dog for decades. But honestly it just hit me tonight that you really *are* crazy about him and it's not just a little-girl crush—so what is it with you, why don't you just *do* it?"

"He would never marry a non-Orthodox girl."

"Well, fine, you're pretty Orthodox."

"Don't be a moron, you know what I mean. My synagogue, the school where I teach, they're Conservative, and not *very* Conservative, more like Reform. I don't keep kosher and so forth. As you know perfectly well."

"Well, you don't eat ham sandwiches, or even shrimp. I practically never *heard* of a girl so fantastically religious she doesn't even eat shrimp." Silence. They both know exactly what it is to keep kosher: their shared grandparents, Orthodox Jews from France, taught them all about it. When the grandmother died ten years ago, the grandfather returned with misgivings to his ancestral village outside Paris. He writes Libbie once a week, and she writes him back.

"So *get* Orthodox!"

"You don't change your religious practices to get a man, that would be dishonest, and everyone would see right through it. *He* would, obviously,

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and everyone else, too—it wouldn't even work, and anyway you wouldn't do it, because it would be insincere. It would be really low. It would be unprincipled and everyone knows that. Anyway I know it. Everyone knows it. And Orthodox Judaism—the position of women in Orthodox Judaism is no good. I mean, yes, they *say* they're happy, and I don't deny that Grandma really was happy. Yes, they're treated with dignity and respect and all that, and their role is in a sense the central one. But obviously they make you sit separately from the men in synagogue—and I can't tell you how devastated my mom and dad would be. It's not an issue, because it's a thing you wouldn't do, *on principle*. But my parents, Lord, it would be—they would be crushed, it would be nearly as bad as marrying a *goy*, maybe worse in a way, depending on the *goy*. For me to tell them I was turning Orthodox and marrying an Orthodox Jew? It would be back-to-the-ghetto time, you know that perfectly well, they would be mortified. I mean, *mortified*. They'd be shattered. But you couldn't do it, I mean, on principle. It's not an option. It's not a thing you could do. And the thing is, he wouldn't marry me anyway."

"Okay, fine. Loser. Quitter. Just tell me what to wear on Saturday morning."

For a moment she says nothing. Then in a soft dignified voice: "You don't understand."

"Like hell I don't. I read you loud and clear, Miss Passive-Pure-and-Sweet. Let *him* come to *me*. It won't work any more, it's 1978, remember? That romance crap is gone, where you sit on your rear end like a potted plant and get picked out. And thank God it is. You're *relieved*, aren't you? You were a feminist before I was!"

"Sure I'm relieved."

"I don't want to hurt your feelings but you are getting, sort of, y'know, weirder and weirder—but you *taught* me feminism! You *are* relieved?"

"I just told you I am. Of course I am."

TWO HOURS later Steven has finally concluded he is not going to fall asleep. He stands on his bed, then hops softly to the ground, puts on a bathrobe, goes to the living room. Pulls the large, worn *humash* from the bookcase and lays it open on the kitchen table. Turns to the passage in Exodus that (with Passover approaching) he plans to discuss in his lecture on Saturday. Merely looking at the pages of this Hebrew Bible lofts his mood into a distant key, comfortable but majestic. He knows the text by heart, starts to read and then (following the ancient markings) to sing quietly aloud. He continues way past the end of the section he had picked out.

Eventually his eyes are dry and tired and his neck hurts. He stops. The refrigerator cycles on: a big moment in the night silence. It cycles off. That long-ago afternoon when he and Jackie were teenagers and she almost seduced him but he ran out on her is still the major event of his life, dividing his memory in two. Idling beside the propped-open kitchen window he registers the occasional car swishing past, three stories below. The weary haul of a truck. The pantomiming traffic lights. In deep night, mere things can turn vaguely alien and untrustworthy, a cluster of crows eyeing you—the toaster, coffee maker, phone on the wall. Your mind can wander off, slip away like a prowling cat and leave you blankly staring. Something is bothering him even beyond Libbie and Jackie and the near-seduction of ten years ago, a tone coloring his thoughts like an offstage clarinet, not happy but not sad. He can't quite pull the memory into focus.

Toward three, a random house-noise wakes Libbie. Guilt and worry surge through the smallest crack in her sleep—she's always been that way. She lies uneasily awake. Where did the phrase come from? Did Jackie use it once to taunt her? Did her dreams concoct it: the virgin feminist?

Words and thoughts get stuck in her head, particularly ones that make her unhappy. She once mentioned this tendency to one of her endless line of unsatisfactory boyfriends, a scrawny medical student who had explained to her over dessert in a fancy midtown restaurant (candle flames echoing off silver) what the tendency meant: that she was suffering from an obsessive-compulsive disorder. "A classic presentation," he said, pushing back from the table and thoughtfully crossing his legs (first smoothing the trousers) so she could be exposed to the full weight of his medical authority. He stretched an arm forward to tap his teaspoon on the saucer, enjoying the clink. Enjoying everything. "Of course, I don't want to claim expertise in psychiatry, though I do know a little." A quiet smile. "But, bottom line: I would definitely seek treatment." A final definitive tap of the spoon.

She had known him in high school. Then he had become a colorless hard worker at a medium-grade college near Boston, and now he wore his medical-studenthood draped round him like the imperial purple. I would definitely seek treatment. (Clink.)

It makes her smile. At length she is asleep again.

Her cousin Jackie sleeps soundly. The sleep of victory—seamless, smooth, and sleek. Her life and her times are satin on her cheek.

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OBSERVATIONS

A Patriotic Left?

John Fonte

IT WAS not so very long ago that the standard view of America on the Left was of a racist, sexist, and imperialist society with an essentially evil past: in short, to use a favored term of opprobrium from the 1960's, "Amerika."

Today, America-bashing has not altogether disappeared on the Left, but it has come to be supplemented, and in some quarters even replaced, by something new, and something very surprising. In fact, one of the more unexpected cultural developments of recent years is the number of prominent leftists who have stopped cursing the United States and have starting praising it—and praising it in unabashedly patriotic terms.

In his new book, *Achieving Our Country*,* the philosopher Richard Rorty exhorts his fellow leftists and academics to embrace "national pride" and to tell "inspiring stories about episodes and figures in the nation's past." Todd Gitlin, once the president of Students for a Democratic Society and still a leading American "progressive," sounds a similar note in *The Twilight of Common Dreams* (1995), where he writes with admiration about the founding fathers and proclaims his hopes for a revival of "democratic Americanism." The political scientist Benjamin Barber, who has long denounced the undemocratic arrangements of our society, now opines that "to be an American" is "to be enmeshed in a unique story of freedom," while Alexander Aleinikoff, a former top Clinton appointee at the Immigration and Naturalization Service, has unfurled the banner of a "progressive American nationalism," declaring that "the idea of . . . the American nation" is "worth defending."

This newfound patriotism in precincts where the United States was once routinely portrayed as a cross between Nazi Germany and the Ku Klux Klan is startling, to say the least. What is going on?

AT LEAST one thing that is going on, as some of the new patriots frankly admit, is a simple shift of tactics. Having spent years in the political wilderness, they have decided to accommodate what appears to be a permanent disposition in American public life. In the words of the philosopher Martha Nussbaum, "Appeals to patriotism can be strategically valuable. . . . [W]e frequently have no choice but to mobilize people at this level." Or as Rorty puts it, "an unpatriotic Left never achieved anything."

But what is it that the patriotic Left means to achieve? Substantively, the notion at the heart of the new rhetoric is that there is a "true" America to which the Left should pledge its allegiance; but it is not the America of the here and now. Rather, the true America lies somewhere on the horizon. Rorty and others commonly refer to the U.S. as an "unfinished" nation. Gitlin sees the American project as an offshoot of Enlightenment thought and in that sense "an aspiration, an invitation, a commitment . . . to bring about understandings that do not yet exist." Lawrence Levine, in *The Opening of the American Mind* (1996), speaks of the country as an

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example of "dynamic becoming." Barber cites a couplet by the poet Langston Hughes: "O, let America be America again / The land that never has been yet."

FROM THIS starting point, different writers go off in different directions. Some, harking back to the themes and slogans of the Old Left, suggest that the way to attain the "land that never has been yet" is to emphasize goals like material equality, or the responsibility of society for developing the capacities of every individual. In articulating this position, Rorty, patriotically enough, cites not a hoary European like Karl Marx but authorities out of the American past: specifically, the poet Walt Whitman (1819-1892) and the philosopher John Dewey (1859-1952). Both, he contends, "wanted the struggle for social justice"—that is, the redistribution of society's wealth and benefits—"to be the country's animating principle," and both can thus guide us to the America that can and ought to be.

But equality of condition is not really the dominant theme on the Left today. What really brings its factions together, even including the flagging social-democratic remnant, is the idea of a multicultural, or "transnational," America.

According to the new patriots, America needs more, not less, group-consciousness. American citizenship itself, writes Alexander Alienikoff, is a deal struck among "mutually respecting" ethnic and cultural groups, and should be understood as a "contract under constant renegotiation." Nor is there any need for immigrants to assimilate to some historically-defined "American Idea." Their sense of their own ethnicity, far from being, as conservatives fear, a solvent of our larger national identity, will actually strengthen it.

In a similar vein, James Banks of the University of Washington, the author of a leading social-studies textbook, contends that if we are "to create an authentically democratic *unum*, the *pluribus* (diverse peoples) must negotiate and share power." For Benjamin Barber, the reason diversity will prevail in the end is that it alone is "capable of securing an American future in a world that . . . is not going to be exclusively American, white, or male."

SUCH TALK on the part of academic leftists provides a kind of ideological window-dressing for a movement—multiculturalism—that has already exercised a powerful effect on our nation's classrooms at every level, and has changed the very vocabulary in which the history and character of America are discussed by our children and their teachers. The National History Standards, a federal guide for state school boards promulgated in 1994, goes so far as to eschew the notion of an American people, preferring instead to speak of the country's "peoples." Other authorities, out of respect for the hemisphere's natives, instruct students that Europeans did not in fact "discover" the Americas, and encourage them to view "historical events and situations in ways that are fair and sensitive to all cultural groups affected." And so forth.

It may be pertinent to ask in this connection whether, as the new patriots assert, multicultural education does in fact strengthen the sense of national identity. In fact, it does the opposite. In San Diego, for example, over 5,000 students were asked about their view of themselves as they progressed from the ninth to the twelfth grade. At the beginning of the study, in the early 1990's, 43 percent considered themselves either simple or hyphenated Americans. Four years later, thanks to the ministrations of the multiculturalists, only 30 percent did. As for the number strongly identifying with another nation (like Mexico or the Philippines), it rose from 32 percent in the ninth grade to almost half after four years of high school. The only thing bolstered by the teaching of group-consciousness, in other words, is group-consciousness.

To the leftist intellectuals who speak of the "unfinished" American project, however, that may be all to the good. On the very first page of *Achieving Our Country*, Richard Rorty declares that, though a believer in the need for national pride, he hopes the U.S. "will someday yield up sovereignty to what Tennyson called 'the Parliament of Man, the Federation of the World.'" What this suggests is that, for at least some of the new patriots, the only way America can truly complete its "unfinished" project is to disappear.

In the 30 years that have passed since the late 1960's, the Left has moved from a dark emphasis on radical American evil to a buoyant emphasis on radical American possibility. There can be no question but that its new rhetoric of reconstruction, under which it seems prepared to march into the next century, is more appealing than its old rhetoric of deconstruction. And it has already proved more successful: behind the friendly face of diversity and multiculturalism, the prospects are bright for imposing the Left's new vision on whole generations of Americans. Which makes it all the more important to understand that, rhetoric aside, this vision remains as hostile as ever to America as it is, and as it was conceived to be. Today's new patriotism is hardly a cause for flag-waving.

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MUSIC

Gershwin at 100

Terry Teachout

ONE HUNDRED years after his birth, George Gershwin is the most widely remembered of the songwriters who dominated American popular music between the end of World War I and the rise of rock-and-roll. Some three dozen of his 700-odd songs, most of them written in collaboration with his older brother Ira, continue to be performed regularly, and his name remains a potent symbol of an era and a musical style.

But Gershwin's special place in American popular culture is not due solely, or even primarily, to his songs. Instead, he is remembered above all for having been, in the words of Irving Berlin, "the only songwriter I know who became a composer." In 1924, at the age of twenty-five, he wrote *Rhapsody in Blue*, a work for piano and jazz band that would become the most frequently performed piece of concert music by an American; he would go on to compose a tone poem, an overture, a full-length opera, and three more works for piano and orchestra prior to his untimely death in 1937 at the age of thirty-eight.

As Berlin's remark suggests, Gershwin was unique in his attempt to compose "classical" music while simultaneously writing scores for Broadway and Hollywood. This was what first brought him to the attention of the general public, and it also explains why he is now better known than such gifted contemporaries as Jerome Kern, Cole Porter, and Richard Rodgers. Unlike them, he longed to do something far more ambitious than writing popular songs; he sought in his concert works to create, in his own words, "a musical kaleidoscope of America—of our vast melting pot, of our incomparable national pep, our blues, our metropolitan madness."

Ambition is the father of controversy, and Gershwin has long been the subject of rancorous debate. Many classical composers, including Aaron Copland and Virgil Thomson, dismissed his concert works as unimportant, though others, most notably Maurice Ravel and Arnold Schoenberg, took them very seriously indeed. Some of the criticism directed at Gershwin's music during his lifetime betrayed anti-Semitic and nativist sentiment. Conversely, many black musicians have claimed that his work is entirely derivative of jazz, sometimes going so far as to accuse him of actual plagiarism.

While such controversies have done nothing to diminish Gershwin's popularity, they may have slowed his acceptance as a legitimate subject of research. No scholarly biography has yet been written (in part because Gershwin's estate has long been reluctant to cooperate with independent scholars), and it is only in recent years that musicologists have begun to produce serious studies of his work.[1]

These studies, whatever effect

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[1] The outstanding critical work to date is David Schiff's recently published *Gershwin: "Rhapsody in Blue,"* a monograph in the Cambridge Music Handbooks series (Cambridge, 126 pp., $11.95, paper), on which I have drawn extensively in writing the present essay. I am also indebted to William Youngren's uncollected articles on Gershwin's concert music. Among published primary sources, Ira Gershwin's *Lyrics on Several Occasions* (1959) is the most important; also of interest is Edward Jablonski's *Gershwin Remembered* (1992), a wide-ranging collection of memoirs and contemporary accounts.

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they may have or fail to have on the disputes provoked by Gershwin's concert music, do at least make the listener's task easier. For *Rhapsody in Blue*, *An American in Paris*, and *Porgy and Bess* cannot be truly experienced until they are stripped of the obscuring camouflage of unstylish performances and ideology-driven criticism and allowed to stand on their own. To approach Gershwin's music in this historically aware way is the first step toward taking it—and him—seriously.

George Gershwin was born Jacob Gershvin in Brooklyn on September 26, 1898. He was the second son of Moshe Gershovitz and Rose Bruskin, who emigrated from czarist Russia to the United States in the 1890's. As Ira Gershwin would unsentimentally recall:

> Most of our early childhood was spent on the Lower East Side of Manhattan where my father engaged in various activities: restaurants, Russian and Turkish baths, bakeries, a cigar store and pool parlor. . . . When my father sold a business and started another we would inevitably move to a new neighborhood. George and I once counted over 25 flats and apartments we remembered having lived in during those days.

Gershwin did not begin studying piano until the comparatively late age of twelve, but his progress thereafter was rapid. At fifteen, he dropped out of high school to become a Tin Pan Alley "song plugger," a pianist who demonstrated new songs for performers. He cut his first player-piano rolls in 1915, and four years later wrote *La La Lucille*, the first of two dozen Broadway scores. Meanwhile, he intermittently continued to study harmony and orchestration with Edward Kilenyi and Rubin Goldmark, the latter of whom was Aaron Copland's first composition teacher.

Gershwin soon established himself as one of the outstanding musical-comedy composers of the day. His theater songs were superbly crafted miniatures whose clear-cut, beautifully balanced melodic lines, elegant harmonies, and ebullient spirits proved irresistible to singers and audiences alike; they were set to Ira Gershwin's witty lyrics, technically no less accomplished though tending to the emotionally shallow. (Interestingly, Ira's most deeply felt lyric, for Harold Arlen's "The Man That Got Away," was written long after his brother's death.)

But George's interests, unlike those of his brother, extended far beyond the field of show music. He composed an unsuccessful one-act "jazz opera," *Blue Monday*, in 1922. Two years later, he was the piano soloist for the premiere of his *Rhapsody in Blue*, a work commissioned by the bandleader Paul Whiteman as part of a program of "symphonic jazz" called "An Experiment in Modern Music." Despite mixed reviews, the piece was an immediate popular success, and Gershwin and Whiteman subsequently recorded an abridged version for Victor that received wide circulation.[2] From then on, he divided his time between popular and classical music, with the latter occupying a steadily growing share of his attention.

Gershwin's creative energy was as abundant as his oft-remarked vanity. ("Tell me, George," the pianist Oscar Levant ribbed him, "if you had it to do all over again—would you still fall in love with yourself?") In addition to continuing his studies with modernist composers like Wallingford Riegger and Henry Cowell, he also taught himself to paint, eventually becoming an accomplished amateur portraitist and acquiring a notable collection of works by such contemporary artists as Picasso, Derain, and Rouault.

Those who knew him best agreed that Gershwin's personality was more complex—and troubled—than was generally recognized. Incapable of committing himself to a long-term romantic relationship, he had unsatisfactory affairs with the songwriter Kay Swift, the actresses Simone Simon and Paulette Goddard, and others. A lifelong victim of what he called "composer's stomach," he eventually became a patient of the controversial psychoanalyst Gregory Zilboorg.

In 1935, Gershwin completed *Porgy and Bess*, his first and only opera, a commercial failure that lost $70,000—nearly $850,000 in 1997 dollars. (A subsequent tour brought Gershwin $10,000 in royalties, less than he had spent on copyists' fees.) To recoup their losses, he and Ira moved to Los Angeles, where they wrote the scores for two Fred Astaire films, *Shall We Dance* and *A Damsel in Distress*. But he found the relentlessly commercial atmosphere of Hollywood incompatible with his increasingly serious musical interests. As he told his sister Frankie:

> I don't feel I've scratched the surface. I'm out here to make enough money with movies so I don't have to think of money any more. Because I just want to work on American music: symphonies, chamber music, opera. This is what I really want to do.

In 1937, Gershwin began to experience severe headaches and other debilitating symptoms that his analyst assumed to be psychosomatic. Given his deepening depression, the assumption was understandable. "I am thirty-eight, famous, and rich, but profoundly unhappy," he had recently told a friend. But in fact he was suffering from a fulminating brain tumor. An emergency operation was finally done after he lapsed into a coma, but he never regained consciousness, dying the day after surgery.

Historically speaking, Gershwin's significance as a songwriter lies in his use of jazz-derived techniques. His melodies are full of flattened thirds and sevenths—known

[2] Recordings of Gershwin's music are discussed in the discography at the end of this article.

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in jazz as "blue" notes—and the springy syncopations he picked up from the "stride" pianists of Harlem. But jazz was by no means the only idiom that influenced Gershwin. "Blue" melodic inflections are also to be found in the Yiddish-theater music he listened to as a boy, while his classical training gave him a frame of reference far wider than that of a self-taught tunesmith like Irving Berlin. It was thus a logical development for him to compose longer instrumental pieces in which his varied influences could be integrated into a coherent style.

Rhapsody in Blue, the first of these works, was scored by Ferde Grofé for Paul Whiteman's 23-piece dance band, in which saxophones and banjo figured prominently. The first recording, made eight months after the premiere, still startles listeners—the instrumental colors are brash to the point of crudity—and it is not hard to imagine the galvanizing effect such sonorities must have had on the work's earliest audiences. For all the freshness of Grofé's scoring, it was Gershwin's indelible melodies and brilliantly effective writing for solo piano that made *Rhapsody in Blue* more than just a short-lived curiosity.

Many critics have disparaged *Rhapsody in Blue* as a sanitized piece of pseudo-jazz, interesting only to the extent that it borrows from more authentic musical sources. But they overlook the fact that Gershwin composed *Rhapsody* at a time when jazz itself was still comparatively young. Louis Armstrong and Jelly Roll Morton were then all but unknown outside New Orleans and Chicago, while Duke Ellington and Bix Beiderbecke had yet to make their first recordings.

To be sure, Gershwin had already learned much from jazz. But his music was at least as influential on later jazz musicians, black and white alike, as it was influenced by early ones. In any case, *Rhapsody in Blue*, like his other concert works, is not jazz *per se* but a highly personal stylistic amalgam that owes as much to Tchaikowsky and Liszt—not to mention Berlin, Kern, and the novelty pianist Zez Confrey—as it does to jazz and the blues.

The chief weakness of *Rhapsody in Blue* is not that it is derivative but that it is made up of good tunes that, ornamented and juxtaposed with considerable skill, are never developed symphonically. It is, in short, much the sort of extended piece one would expect from a talented but inexperienced young songwriter, and had it been Gershwin's sole attempt at an extended instrumental work, Aaron Copland would have been right to dismiss him as merely "a good Broadway composer."

Instead, Gershwin chose to grapple systematically with the challenge of large-scale form, and by the end of 1925 he had composed and orchestrated a three-movement piano concerto and appeared as soloist in the first performance, accompanied by Walter Damrosch and the New York Symphony Orchestra.[3] The Concerto in F is by no means a perfect piece, but it represents a quantum leap in formal command on Gershwin's part, one accomplished without losing any of the jazzy vitality of *Rhapsody in Blue*.

An even more impressive grasp of musical form can be heard in the tone poem *An American in Paris* (1928). Though Gershwin would produce three more concert pieces—the Second Rhapsody (1931), the *Cuban Overture* (1932), and the *I Got Rhythm Variations* (1934)—none is nearly so memorable as *An American in Paris*, in which classical music, jazz, and American popular song are decisively fused into a unified, strongly individual style. Here, as in the Concerto in F, most of the alleged "defects" of Gershwin's scoring are actually the result of insensitive performances by over-large orchestras. When Gershwin's original orchestrations are played in a straightforward, unfussy manner by a medium-sized ensemble, the clarity of his sonorous image becomes immediately apparent.[4]

BY THE early 30's, Gershwin had acquired a knowledge of the classical repertoire more extensive than that of any other popular musician of his time—he was especially interested in the music of Berg and Stravinsky—and was ready at last to satisfy his longstanding desire to write an opera. In 1929, he had signed a contract with the Metropolitan Opera to compose a stage work based on S. Ansky's classic Yiddish play *The Dybbuk*. But he later abandoned the project, and the Met, in favor of a musical version of a once-popular novel by DuBose Heyward about life on Catfish Row, the black ghetto of Charleston, South Carolina.

A flop by Broadway standards when produced by the Theater Guild in 1935, *Porgy and Bess* is now widely regarded as Gershwin's masterpiece. The opera's initial lack of success, it is now clear, had less to do with its qualities as music than with the unfortunate circumstances of its premiere.

A complete performance of *Porgy* runs for well over three hours, not counting intermissions. (*Aida*, by contrast, is an hour shorter.) By opting for a Broadway production, Gershwin left himself no choice but to cut the score by about a quarter, a compromise that left no one satisfied. Broadway audiences found the results dull and depressing, while critics, unaware of the structural damage done by the cuts, regarded *Porgy* as an overblown musical comedy ineptly disguised as an opera. The composer-critic Virgil Thomson, for instance, derided it as the work of a bumptious naïf:

> His lack of understanding of all the major problems of form, of continuity, and of serious or di-

[3] Persistent rumors to the contrary not withstanding, Gershwin scored all his own concert works after *Rhapsody in Blue*, though he readily admitted to soliciting the advice of more experienced orchestrators.

[4] Unfortunately, *An American in Paris* and the Second Rhapsody are now usually heard in textually corrupt editions partially rescored by Frank Campbell-Watson.

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> rect musical expression is not surprising in view of the impurity of his musical sources and his frank acceptance of the same. . . .The material is straight from the melting pot. At best it is a piquant but highly unsavory stirring-up together of Israel, Africa, and the Gaelic Isles. . . . I do not like fake folklore, nor fidgety accompaniments, nor bittersweet harmony, nor six-part choruses, nor gefilte-fish orchestration.

Thomson's anti-Semitic innuendos echoed the view of earlier American composers who had likewise found Gershwin's "melting-pot" approach incompatible with the maintenance of Anglo-Saxon musical standards. But they also divert attention from the perhaps more significant fact that Thomson plainly resented Gershwin's relative success.

In 1934, Thomson's opera *Four Saints in Three Acts*, featuring an all-black cast and conducted by Alexander Smallens, had a brief run on Broadway and scored a *succès d'estime* among the intellectuals. The following year, *Porgy and Bess*, also featuring an all-black cast and also conducted by Smallens, ran for 124 performances, a disastrously short run by the rigidly commercial standards of Broadway but an unprecedented triumph for a full-length opera by an American composer. Moreover, *Porgy*'s principal numbers were promptly recorded by famous singers and quickly became hits, while *Four Saints* went unrecorded until 1947 (and did not receive its New York opera-house premiere until 1996).

Duke Ellington, another American composer who sought without success to write for the stage, made similarly derogatory remarks about *Porgy and Bess*:

> It was taken from some of the best and a few of the worst. Gershwin surely didn't discriminate: he borrowed from everyone from Liszt to Dickie Wells's kazoo band. . . . The first thing that gives it away is that it does not use the Negro musical idiom. It was not the music of Catfish Row or any other kind of Negroes. . . . There was a crap game such as no one has ever seen or heard. It might have been opera, but it wasn't a crap game. The music went one way and the action another.

Other black musicians have similarly claimed that *Porgy and Bess* is inauthentic in its use of black idiom. But surely the "authenticity" of Gershwin's score is no longer a meaningful issue: what matters is the fact that it is compelling, whatever the means by which it works its compulsion on the listener. In Ellington's case, moreover, the animus was no doubt motivated in part by his own lifelong inability to master the organically larger musical forms that Gershwin had learned to use so skillfully.[5]

A MORE generous appraisal of Gershwin's abilities was offered after his death by his friend Arnold Schoenberg: "It seems to me beyond doubt that Gershwin was an innovator. . . . [H]e expressed musical ideas; and they were new—as is the way in which he expressed them." No less enthusiastic was a letter sent by Maurice Ravel in 1928 to Nadia Boulanger, the great French composition teacher whose pupils included Copland and Thomson:

> There is a musician here endowed with the most brilliant, most enchanting, and perhaps the most profound talent, George Gershwin. His worldwide success no longer satisfies him, for he is aiming higher. He knows that he lacks the technical means to achieve his goal. In teaching him those means, one might ruin his talent. Would you have the courage, which I wouldn't dare have, to undertake this awesome responsibility?

Gershwin, of course, never studied with Schoenberg or Boulanger, and there is no imagining what he might have done had he committed himself fully to classical music, much less lived to a normal age. Yet it is precisely because what he did accomplish was so extraordinary that this unanswerable question continues to tantalize us.

Rhapsody in Blue is a fifteen-minute-long assemblage of hummable tunes stitched together largely in ignorance of the rules of musical form and scored by another hand. A mere eleven years later, Gershwin completed a three-act opera (the vocal score is 559 pages long), every bar of which he orchestrated himself: a work of considerable dramatic subtlety whose "hit tunes" are developed with the sophistication of a far more experienced operatic composer. No other American songwriter of the 30's—and no jazz musician, not even Ellington—could have composed *Porgy and Bess*, or anything remotely like it.

For this reason, it may be more appropriate to compare Gershwin not with his fellow songwriters, or even with Ellington, but with a composer like Copland or Samuel Barber. Here, he clearly comes up short, as can readily be heard by placing *An American in Paris* side by side with, say, Copland's *Appalachian Spring* or the Barber Piano Sonata, two acknowledged masterpieces of American modernism that plumb expressive depths Gershwin never came close to sounding. Still, given the small size of his classical output and the cruelly short span of his career—at thirty-eight, the age Gershwin died, Copland had only just begun to write the more accessible middle-period works that made him famous—such comparisons are necessarily problematic.

Perhaps it is enough, then, to say that in addition to being one of the indisputably great popular songwrit-

[5] For a more detailed comparison of the two composers, see my "(Over)praising Duke Ellington," COMMENTARY, September 1996.

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ers of the century, Gershwin left behind three of the most effective concert scores ever written by an American composer, as well as the only American opera yet to have entered the international repertory. This achievement is quite sufficient to commend him to posterity—and it is a particularly noteworthy one just at the present moment. At a time when *e pluribus unum* has increasingly come to be viewed not as a credo but as an insult, and when one's ethnic origin is taken as the sole measure of artistic authenticity, it is salutary to reflect on the life of a genius who proved time and again that art knows no borders. Born into an unlettered, uncultured, lower-middle-class immigrant family, George Gershwin became an internationally celebrated composer who made the whole world of music his own. Nothing could be more American.

Gershwin on CD: A Centenary Discography

EVER SINCE the premiere in 1924 of *Rhapsody in Blue*, George Gershwin's music has been recorded and re-recorded by countless classical and popular musicians. Here are some of the best performances now available:

The Composer Plays

GERSHWIN'S OWN piano playing—crisp, unmannered, and utterly direct—can be heard on *George Gershwin Plays George Gershwin*, which contains all of his commercial recordings, including the two abridged versions of *Rhapsody in Blue* he performed with the Paul Whiteman Orchestra in 1924 and 1927, both of which use Ferde Grofé's original jazz-band orchestration; a brisk 1928 rendition of his Three Preludes; and a group of recordings from 1926 and 1928 in which he plays solo piano versions of eleven songs and accompanies Fred and Adele Astaire on four others. Also included is Nat Shilkret's 1929 premiere of *An American in Paris*, a stylish interpretation full of vivid period flavor (Pearl GEMM CDS 9483, two CD's).

In Concert

THE PIANIST Oscar Levant, Gershwin's close friend and trusted interpreter, recorded *Rhapsody in Blue*, the Concerto in F, the Second Rhapsody, and the *I Got Rhythm Variations*; these performances, sometimes heavy-handed but otherwise idiomatic, are collected on *Levant Plays Gershwin. Rhapsody in Blue* is heard here in Grofé's 1942 large-orchestra version, the other works in Gershwin's original, unretouched orchestrations (CBS MK 42514).

Although few European-born conductors have given convincing performances of Gershwin's concert music, Arturo Toscanini proved a welcome exception to the rule in his 1945 recording with the NBC Symphony of *An American in Paris*, a wonderfully vital interpretation containing none of the exaggeratedly "jazzy" mannerisms of such later conductors as Leonard Bernstein (RCA 09026-60307-2).

Leonard Slatkin and the St. Louis Symphony have given us excellent performances of *An American in Paris*, *Cuban Overture*, *Catfish Row* (Gershwin's own orchestral suite from *Porgy and Bess*), and *Promenade*, a witty instrumental *entr'acte* composed for the soundtrack of *Shall We Dance* (Angel CDD 64084).

The pianist-composer William Bolcom can be heard in a first-rate performance of *George Gershwin's Song-Book*, a folio of eighteen songs arranged by the composer for solo piano in 1932, together with the rest of Gershwin's solo piano music; the CD version of this album also contains engaging versions of ten Gershwin standards sung by the mezzo-soprano Joan Morris with Bolcom at the piano (Elektra Nonesuch 9 79151-2).

On Stage

THE COMPLETE scores of *Of Thee I Sing* (1931) and *Let 'Em Eat Cake* (1933) were recorded in 1987 by Michael Tilson Thomas, the New York Choral Artists, the Orchestra of St. Luke's, and a cast of experienced theater singers (CBS M2K 42522, two CD's). Elektra Nonesuch is currently putting out Gershwin's other Broadway scores in meticulously restored editions based on surviving manuscript materials and prepared in cooperation with the Gershwin estate; the series to date includes *Oh, Kay!*, 1926 (Elektra Nonesuch 9 79361-2); *Strike Up the Band*, 1927, rev. 1930 (9 79273-2, two CD's); and *Girl Crazy*, 1930 (9 79250-2).

Todd Duncan and Anne Brown, who created the roles of Porgy and Bess, recorded highlights from the score in 1940, accompanied by a studio orchestra under Alexander Smallens (Decca MCAD-10520). Leontyne Price and William Warfield, the stars of the 1952 revival that established *Porgy and Bess* as a viable stage work, recorded extend-

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ed excerpts in 1963, superbly accompanied by a studio chorus and orchestra conducted by Skitch Henderson (RCA 5234-2-RG). The best complete recording of *Porgy and Bess* was made by Simon Rattle, the London Philharmonic, and the cast and chorus of the 1986 Glyndebourne Opera production. Rattle's generally fine conducting is marred by occasional touches of Bernstein-like overemphasis, but the singing and orchestral playing are of the highest quality throughout (EMI CDCC 49568, three CD's).

Of the many jazz interpretations of *Porgy and Bess* on disk, the most interesting is the version arranged for jazz orchestra by Gil Evans and featuring the trumpeter Miles Davis (Columbia CK-65141, 1958).

The Songwriter

The George and Ira Gershwin Songbook, a collection of 53 songs recorded in 1959 by Ella Fitzgerald and a studio orchestra led by the arranger Nelson Riddle, has remained continuously in print since its initial release (Verve 825 024-2YH3, three CD's). In addition to this much-admired album, here are noteworthy interpretations of ten Gershwin standards:

"Embraceable You"—The King Cole Trio (*Nat "King" Cole, 1943-1944*, Classics 804, 1943).

"How Long Has This Been Going On?"—Louis Armstrong, accompanied by the Oscar Peterson Trio (*Let's Do It: Best of the Verve Years*, Verve 315 529 017-2, two CD's, 1957).

"I Loves You, Porgy"—Bill Evans (*Bill Evans at the Montreux Jazz Festival*, Verve 314 539 758-2, 1968).

"Isn't It a Pity?"—Shirley Horn, arranged by Johnny Mandel (*Here's to Life*, Verve 314 511 879-2, 1991).

"I've Got a Crush on You"—Frank Sinatra, arranged by Axel Stordahl and featuring Bobby Hackett on cornet (*Swing and Dance with Frank Sinatra*, Columbia CK 64852, 1947).

"Liza"—Art Tatum (*Art Tatum: The Quintessence*, Fremeaux & Associés FA 217, two CD's, 1934).

"The Man I Love"—Coleman Hawkins's Swing Four (*Coleman Hawkins, 1943-1944*, Classics 807, 1943).

"Nice Work If You Can Get It"—Mel Tormé, arranged by Marty Paich (*Mel Tormé Sings Fred Astaire*, Bethelehem BR-5003/BCP-6013, 1956).

"They All Laughed"—Fred Astaire, featuring Johnny Green on piano (*Let's Face the Music and Dance*, ASV CD AJA 5123, 1937).

"They Can't Take That Away From Me"—Tony Bennett, featuring Ralph Sharon on piano (*Steppin' Out*, Columbia CK 57424, 1993).

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Books in Review

The Great Dictator

Explaining Hitler
by Ron Rosenbaum
Random House. 448 pp. $30.00

Reviewed by
Gabriel Schoenfeld

WHY DID Hitler murder six million of Europe's Jews? A half-century later, we still live under the shadow of this satanic creature who reduced a civilization to ruin. Though the subject of study after study, the Nazi dictator remains somehow unfathomable: "The more I learn about Hitler, the harder I find it to explain," writes one of his leading biographers, Alan Bullock. But as the essayist and novelist Ron Rosenbaum demonstrates in *Explaining Hitler*, there is always more to learn. Rosenbaum's book is an attempt to enter into Hitler's "inwardness," to apprehend the motivation for a crime so horrific it will always seem beyond our grasp.

A dozen years ago, for reasons he connects to his own family history, Rosenbaum set out to make sense of the great Jewish catastrophe. Combing through untapped archives in Vienna, Munich, and Berlin, as well as the declassified files of Allied intelligence agencies, he hoped to tie up some loose biographical ends that would clarify the mystery of Hitler's psyche. But as he carried out his probe, Rosenbaum's focus began to shift. From a quest for what he calls an "Ultimate Explanation," he turned to a more modest endeavor: not explaining Hitler himself, but rather "explain[ing] the explainers." By means of this indirect approach—an examination of what leading historians, theologians, psychoanalysts, biographers, and intellectuals have had to say—we might learn "if not *the* truth about Hitler, then *some* truths," and not only about the Nazi leader but also about our own difficulties in coming to grips with him.

Explaining Hitler bears traces of both these purposes. Much of the first half is a look at what Rosenbaum uncovered as he burrowed into the blacker spots in Hitler's past. He is especially interested in the psychosexual aspect of his topic. Thus, he goes at length into Hitler's amorous relationship with his niece, Geli Raubal, who shot herself to death in Hitler's bedroom in 1931. As Rosenbaum notes, she was not the only intimate of the Nazi leader to take her own life. He cites Robert Waite's 1977 monograph, *The Psychopathic God*:

> The idea that Hitler had a sexual perversion particularly abhorrent to women is . . . supported by a statistic: of the seven women who, we can be reasonably sure, had intimate relations with Hitler, six committed suicide or seriously attempted to do so.

I shall return later to the question of that "sexual perversion." The relevant point here is that, in sorting out what is known and unknown about the more sensational aspects of Hitler's past, Rosenbaum himself came to be disturbed by the attempt to locate the origins of the European nightmare in Hitler's psychopathology. All such efforts, he writes, end by excusing Hitler's crimes "on grounds of what the courts call 'diminished capacity,'

GABRIEL SCHOENFELD *is senior editor of* COMMENTARY.

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an inability to know right from wrong."

AS IT turns out, even some of Hitler's more sophisticated interpreters are guilty of a not dissimilar sin. In the second half of *Explaining Hitler*, we encounter a gallery of these figures. Rosenbaum has studied their words closely and, in the case of the living, has interviewed them at length, engaging them in fascinating and sometimes heated discussions of their theories.

In his best-selling *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (1996), for example, Daniel Jonah Goldhagen argued that the Final Solution was the end-product of an "eliminationist anti-Semitism" that propelled Germans to slaughter innocent men, women, and children without a second thought. But, Rosenbaum asks, does not this analysis, in emphasizing the all-important centrality of large social forces, make Hitler's own role in the destruction of European Jewry "virtually irrelevant"? And if Goldhagen lifts responsibility from Hitler, does he not lift it from the "willing executioners" as well? For in Goldhagen's analysis, the "ordinary Germans" who committed monstrous crimes become so many pawns—"victims," in Rosenbaum's words,

> of ideological poisoning which robbed them of the power to resist, robbed them of agency, of choice, any possibility of pursuing another—any other—course than the one they've been driven to.

The astonishingly warm reception Goldhagen's book enjoyed in Germany, Rosenbaum suggests, may even have something to do with the indirect absolution it seems to offer for the crime of genocide.

As Rosenbaum goes on to show, moreover, Goldhagen is hardly the only student of the Holocaust to exculpate Hitler, or the Germans, in some fashion or other. Two much more blatant and even grotesque cases are those of the revisionist historian David Irving and the literary critic George Steiner.

Irving, who lives in England (and is a non-Jew), has built a career on the proposition that Hitler neither ordered the extermination of the Jews nor even knew about it. His sources for this contention tend to be the aging survivors of Hitler's coterie, whom he has tracked down and cultivated. As Rosenbaum has no trouble showing, Irving is a deep anti-Semite, one who refers to Jews as the "traditional enemy," who "lectures" before neo-Nazi audiences to shouts of "*Sieg Heil*," and who has taken on a self-described role as Hitler's "ambassador to the afterlife." Much of what he says and writes simply does not withstand critical scrutiny—which has not prevented him from exercising a malign influence as a "scholarly" witness for the innocence of the Nazi leader.

GEORGE STEINER, a British Jew of Austrian and Czech parentage and a distinguished man of letters, is a far more complicated case. In his novel, *The Portage to San Cristobal of A.H.* (1983), Steiner presents a Hitler who has survived the war, is tracked down in South America by Israeli agents, and is permitted to make a statement justifying his deeds. He does so in a lengthy and brilliant set-piece in which he asserts that the Nazi notion of a master race is nothing more than a borrowing from the Jewish conception of the chosen people; blames Judaism for provoking the Holocaust by bringing into the world a superior morality that "left man a guilty serf" and caused a festering, murderous resentment; and claims credit for saving the Jewish people because his *Shoah* led to the birth of the state of Israel.

Hitler's soliloquy goes pointedly unanswered in Steiner's novel, where it constitutes virtually its closing words. When enacted in the stage version of *The Portage to San Cristobal of A.H.*, the speech has elicited sustained applause from audiences. Steiner himself has conspicuously declined to elaborate on what he had in mind in putting this extraordinary *apologia pro vita sua* in the mouth of history's monster. To Rosenbaum, however, an interviewer with a gift for shearing through mental armor, Steiner confides that the speech does not merely express the viewpoint of a fictionalized character but is intended as his *own* rationalization for the mass slaughter of European Jewry. "We," says Steiner, referring to his fellow Jews,

> are that which have shown mankind to be ultimately bestial. We refused Jesus, who dies hideously on the cross. And then mankind turns on us in a vulgar kind of counter-Golgotha which is Auschwitz.

The combination of self-laceration and moral megalomania in this statement leaves one reeling.

BY NO MEANS are all of Hitler's explainers as twisted as these examples might suggest. In his survey of serious and balanced scholars, Rosenbaum paints portraits in varying degrees of detail of figures like Alan Bullock, Milton Himmelfarb, Hugh Trevor-Roper, Yehuda Bauer, Christopher Browning, Berel Lang, Hyam Maccoby, and Emil Fackenheim. Arranging them along several taxonomic axes, he attempts to show the strengths and weaknesses of their individual approaches. He is generous to almost all of them, and particularly so to Lang and Himmelfarb, both of whom he credits with zeroing in on Hitler's essential attributes. But the historian whom he regards as coming closest to a true understanding of Hitler's motives is the late Lucy S. Dawidowicz, the author of *The War Against the Jews* (1975), and, like Himmelfarb, a prolific contributor to COMMENTARY.

In contrast to various historians of the "functionalist" school, according to whom Hitler was long

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uncertain about what to do with the Jews, and was pushed into the Final Solution largely by the press of the war, Dawidowicz mounts a convincing case that Hitler had formed annihilationist intentions as early as 1918, and then devoted his life to carrying them out. And in contrast to others, like Trevor-Roper, who have regarded Hitler as wholly evil but also wholly convinced of his own rectitude, Dawidowicz's most original contribution, in Rosenbaum's view, is to show a Hitler not merely evil but positively exulting in evil, a man who murdered millions with laughter in his heart. It is precisely this laughter—so freakish, so alien, so far beyond the apprehension of ordinary conscience—that makes him, writes Rosenbaum, a figure impossible to behold, and impossible fully to grasp.

All in all, Rosenbaum, an amateur historian who confesses to struggling with German and having no command of French—and, what is worse, to being a professional journalist—has succeeded in writing a highly important book. As a *tour d'horizon* of Holocaust scholarship, *Explaining Hitler* connects historical inquiry to the deepest issues of free will, personal responsibility, and evil. Still, for all its intellectual force, the book also has some curious flaws.

For one thing, there are conspicuous and inexplicable absences. Where in Rosenbaum's book is Albert Speer, Hitler's architect and minister of armaments? Speer knew Hitler like few others, and lived to write a remarkable memoir, *Inside the Third Reich* (1970), in which he told what he had seen and heard in countless official meetings and at Hitler's dinner table. Surely, in a survey of Hitler explainers, the case of Speer deserves more space than the few passing references it garners here. And where, too, is the distinguished German historian Joachim Fest? Anyone who has read Fest's arresting study of the Nazi leadership, *The Face of the Third Reich* (1963), or his *Hitler* (1973)—perhaps the single best full-length biography of the man—will be disappointed not to learn what Rosenbaum makes of these outstanding works and where he would place Fest in his taxonomy of explainers.

While such genuinely important material is passed over, Rosenbaum devotes a great deal of space, as I noted earlier, to the numerous strange myths and rumors that have arisen about Hitler's psychopathology. But if the facts behind many of these are rather difficult to pin down (to say the least), and if all tend to exonerate Hitler by pointing to one or another form of severe mental illness, what, it seems fair to ask, is the purpose of sorting them out, particularly those that are on their face utterly preposterous?

To be sure, the tale peddled by one of Hitler's schoolboy chums—that the young Adolf had attempted to urinate into a goat's mouth and had a portion of his penis bitten off—is irresistible. And the precise nature of Hitler's sexual perversion is assuredly an intriguing topic. Rosenbaum suggests he engaged in undinism (known today as "water sports" or "golden showers") and perhaps coprophilia. But, after going back and forth over all the source material, he also admits that no one can say for sure. A similar uncertainty bedevils the "perplexing problem" of whether Hitler had an undescended testicle, although Rosenbaum doubts the finding of the Soviet autopsy report, first published in 1968, which reads in part:

> [T]he genital member is scorched. In the scrotum, which was singed but not preserved, only the right testicle was found.

All this, as I say, is titillating, and

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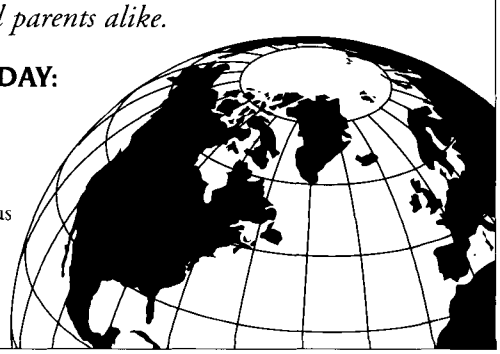

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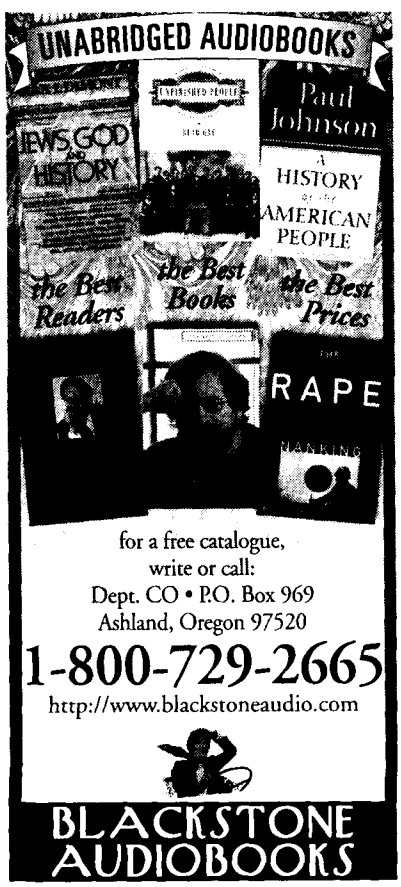
who can object to that? One who does, interestingly, is Claude Lanzmann, the director of the nine-and-a-half hour film *Shoah* and yet another of Rosenbaum's explainers. According to Lanzmann, indeed, *all* inquiry into Hitler's nature is dangerous, and should be forbidden.

One need not agree with Lanzmann's position, and certainly not with the tyrannical way he has attempted to impose it on others, to understand that the net effect of a lengthy discussion of the Fuehrer's anatomy and bedroom depravity, even if its purpose is to debunk falsehoods and the theories built upon them, is to foster yet another historical distortion. Cutting Hitler down to size makes it easy, once again, to underestimate him—and even more difficult than it already is to "reconcile the gravity, the catastrophic magnitude of the events with the vulgar mediocrity of the individual who initiated them" (Herbert Luethy, "The Wretched Little Demon That Was Hitler," COMMENTARY, February 1954).

One is left by all this with a sense of how deeply the intentions with which Rosenbaum began working on his book are at odds with the intention with which he finished it. Still, it is a measure of his achievement that, even with this contradiction at its core, *Explaining Hitler* is a book that glistens with insight and intelligence, and shimmers with originality.



The Unexamined Life

Walking in the Shade: Volume Two of My Autobiography
by Doris Lessing
HarperCollins. 404 pp. $27.50

Reviewed by
Elizabeth Powers

IT WOULD be interesting to know how many of those who purchase Doris Lessing's turgid novels actually get all the way through them, but there is no doubting that she herself is a cultural icon. Practically with the appearance in 1962 of *The Golden Notebook*, whose protagonist, Anna Wulf, was presented as a "completely new type of woman" living "the kind of life [women] never lived before," a certain confluence was felt to exist between the ideals of the women's movement and the works of this Rhodesian-born writer.

The trouble with icons is that they require reverence. Though *The Golden Notebook* actually got a mixed reception from reviewers, its author's subsequent status has ensured a kind of critical meltdown with regard to her subsequent work. There are now twenty-plus Lessing novels in print, and each time another rolls off the presses, the obfuscating platitudes take on a life of their own. In 1969, Joyce Carol Oates called one such indigestible effort "an experimental work in the very best sense"; in 1996, Maureen Corrigan lauded another for its "trademark gravity." Similar pieties have likewise greeted this, the latest volume of her autobiography.

IN A previous installment, *Under My Skin* (1994), Lessing revealed the striking correspondence between her own life and the "life" of Martha Quest, the central figure of three novels she wrote in the 1950's. The essential elements in common include her girlhood on a farm in the British colony of Southern Rhodesia; her poisonous relationship with her mother; her rebellion against the attitudes of her British-born parents; her involvement with the small Communist party in Salisbury before World War II; her requisite intellectual awakening; her loveless early marriage; and her abandonment of her offspring (one under a year old) in order to join her comrades in the struggle to transform the world.

Walking in the Shade takes up the story with Lessing's arrival in London from southern Africa in 1949, and ends in the year 1962. In terms of her literary work, it thus covers the period from the publication of *The Grass Is Singing*, her first novel, in 1950, to the appearance of *The Golden Notebook*. On its surface, however, the book lacks the strong nexus between literature and life that characterized *Under My Skin*. Rather, in the pages of *Walking in the Shade* the writer's life seems to take a back seat to what is essentially a chronicle of the British Left, accompanied by the breast-beating of one who now re-

ELIZABETH POWERS, *whose article "Table Manners and Morals" appeared in our May issue, is co-editor of* Pilgrim Souls: An Anthology of Spiritual Autobiography *(forthcoming from Simon & Schuster).*

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gards her involvement in its passions as, at best, neurotic.

Lessing was a friend of many prominent leftists in England, from literary figures like Kenneth Tynan and John Osborne, to African political exiles like Joshua Nkomo, to eccentrics like Naomi Mitchison, the free-loving sister of the eminent geneticist and Marxist, J.B.S. Haldane. Besides being a member of the Communist party's Writers Group, she participated in various events and causes of the moment, and her invariably caustic accounts of a number of these affairs—including a 1954 trip to the Soviet Union with a delegation of dotty British writers and a meeting with Bertrand Russell—suggest that she possesses a neglected satiric gift.

The meeting with Russell, for example, occurred at the philosopher's castle in Wales, where Lessing and another writer had been dispatched to mediate among the various factions of the nuclear-disarmament movement. Russell, by now a willing pawn in a movement hijacked by the far Left, was decidedly unwelcoming:

> Russell said he saw no point in continuing the discussion and that he was sure we must be tired. He would not be seeing us in the morning, but he would instruct the housekeeper to give us breakfast. Lady Russell and he escorted us to the bedroom, and the atmosphere was such that we would not have been surprised to find we were locked in. It was nine o'clock.

UNFORTUNATELY, THE disjointed sequence of memories, events, and personalities that fill these pages, and the remarkably banal analysis to which they are subjected, combine to make *Walking in the Shade* a failure as a portrait of intellectual life in Britain during the cold war. Nor does it satisfy as a memoir of a writer's gradual abandonment of false youthful ideals. People and events are brought on stage without introduction, as if the reader knows without being reminded what the Aldermaston marches or the Committee of a Hundred were all about. A typical anecdote begins: "Reuben Ship was now married to Elaine Grand." Even the structure of the book—four chapters, organized according to the four London neighborhoods in which Lessing happened to live from 1949 through 1962—is an evasion, turning the successive stages of her life into mere accidents of geography.

Within this undifferentiated and oddly impersonal narrative, one thing that is unmistakable is Lessing's present loathing for Marxism, which she has come to consider an evil doctrine. Welcome though this recognition is, however, one cannot help noticing that the particular qualities embodied in the Marxist mindset, the same qualities that drew her to the movement in the first place, are with her still. One such quality is the refusal to recognize individuals as individuals, rather than as historical counters. The mental habits this gives rise to are evident on every page of *Walking in the Shade*. Thus, about joining the Communist party, Lessing writes: "We were playing a role. The play had been written by 'History.'" And about sex:

> I would say that in the 50's, in the way of love, or sex, the most obvious thing . . . is that people were going to bed because it was expected of them. (The *Zeitgeist* demanded.)

But not everyone did join the party—a *choice* was involved—and not everyone went "to bed because it was expected of them." These are facts Lessing still appears reluctant to acknowledge, taking refuge instead in the bromide that, in love as in politics, "it is impossible to distance oneself from the strong currents of one's time."

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Lessing's portraits of her fellow leftists are tainted by another legacy of Communism: a dark, ungenerous, unforgiving view of human nature. When it comes to herself, moreover, and certain of her own actions—like her abandonment of her first two children, or her treatment of her aged mother—she again displays an attitude not infrequently associated with those who love humanity at large, namely, a callous indifference to humanity in the small. Here is how she records her response to a request by a childhood friend of her mother's for help in securing a place in a "good old people's home":

> I was still so much on the edge of life in London, just clinging on with my fingertips. . . . How was it that Aunt Daisy, who had been in my life since I was born, could not see that she was asking too much of me? . . . Now I said to her, or blurted out, my voice not only shocked but incredulous, meaning, How can you put this onto me when I am so burdened already? "I'm sorry, Aunt Daisy. I can't. I don't know how to begin."

This painful scene is sandwiched between accounts of visits to the Soviet Union, to Naomi Mitchison's castle in Scotland, and to the psychoanalyst who would appear in *The Golden Notebook* as Mother Sugar.

As all these examples suggest, perhaps the most striking aspect of *Walking in the Shade* is its sedulous avoidance of exactly the most crucial task of autobiography: self-scrutiny. But here is where the nexus between Lessing's life and her work does manifest itself after all. For in her reluctance to investigate the meaning of her own experience, Lessing resembles no one so much as her fictional creation, Anna Wulf. Like Anna, another disillusioned Communist, Lessing bestowed more favors on men than they had any right to. In addition to her two legal marriages and her four-year affair with an East European Communist she calls Jack, she was involved, she tells us here, with a string of Americans, Englishmen, and Africans, most of whom left much to be desired. But in the autobiography as in the novel, there is no suggestion that recurring patterns like these signify anything whatsoever about the person experiencing them.

In *The Golden Notebook*, Anna Wulf simply renames reality, calling herself not an emotionally scarred woman but a free one. Lessing, from the evidence of *Walking in the Shade*, has gone beyond that position. Indeed, she is quite harsh on those who would make *The Golden Notebook* into a liberationist tract. Yet, aside from endlessly restating her conviction that humankind is a sorry lot, she gives no indication that she has attained any insight into her own life, or wishes to. From Marxism to a fling with Sufism and other Eastern religions to her frequent animadversions of late on the deplorable state of Western pop culture, the one thing Doris Lessing has not done, in life or in art, is to get under her own skin.

Looking for a Scapegoat

A Brutal Friendship: The West and the Arab Elite
by Saïd K. Aburish
St. Martin's. 414 pp. $25.95

Reviewed by
Daniel Pipes

"There are no legitimate regimes in the Arab Middle East." With this eye-opening first line, Saïd Aburish, an independent-minded Palestinian writer long resident in London, promises something fresh: an insider's exposé of the tyrannical governments that dominate his region. Aburish is, indeed, in a good position to document a sordid political history that harks back to World War I, and he is also no stranger to the form: his previous book, *The Rise, Corruption and Coming Fall of the House of Saud* (1994), was an important if over-the-top denunciation of the Saudi ruling family.

In *A Brutal Friendship*, Aburish sets out to deliver on his promise by offering biting assessments of Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia, plus Yasir Arafat's Palestinian Authority. But, alas, his indictment is brief and superficial, consisting mostly of criticisms of the region's rulers for not following their real interests. And that sets the stage for Aburish's true topic, which is to find a scapegoat for this dismal state of affairs.

Here, to put it charitably, he is less than enlightening. His explanation for Arab tyranny dwells not on the foibles of culture in Arabic-speaking countries; not on their premodern legacy of dictatorship; and not on the winner-take-all atmosphere that dominates their politics. In fact, Aburish has almost nothing to say about the motor forces of Arab life; his attention is focused outward.

What emerges from Aburish's pages, in a nutshell, is that nearly all the problems of the Middle East are due to a vast British and American conspiracy that aims to perpetuate "Western political hegemony" in the regime. The British and American governments are not alone in pursuing their greedy goals; oil companies, too, are complicit, and are blamed by Aburish for, in particular, the "moral degradation" of Arab leaders. As for the citizens of Western countries, they have been too thoroughly brainwashed to resist the corrupt imperialism of their rulers. The only

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Daniel Pipes *is editor of the* Middle East Quarterly *and author of two books on conspiracy theories,* The Hidden Hand *(St. Martin's) and* Conspiracy *(Free Press).*

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Westerners identified by Aburish as seeing through the vast deception are Noam Chomsky and Edward Said, two stars in the firmament of the conspiracist Left.

In pursuit of its aims, the West does not rely on anything so crude or transparent as direct rule. Instead, writes Aburish, the Anglo powers get Arab stooges to do their work for them, teaching them how to "suppress their people to stay in power and use their control of their countries to provide a stability which serves Western political and economic interests." By this means, generations of Arab elites have become nothing more than "deputy sheriffs," or, more pungently, the losing partners in a "master-slave relationship."

Blaming the West leads Aburish into some strange byways. In order to differentiate among Arab leaders, for instance, he constructs a topsy-turvy moral calculus. Those who have explicitly aligned themselves with the West—King Hussein of Jordan, various Egyptian governments, and the like—he castigates as "hideous" and "abominable"; even Yasir Arafat is put down as "a tool" of Western power. By contrast, Saddam Hussein is praised for his "eradication of illiteracy, his health-care programs, and his championing of women's rights," while the fundamentalist Muslim movements are designated the Arabs' one remaining hope. As for Israel, that country all but disappears from the Middle East picture as Aburish draws it. However much he may loathe the Jewish state, he sees it as only another client of the West and therefore not a power in its own right.

TO ANYONE not versed in matters Middle Eastern, the extremist bent of *A Brutal Friendship* might make it seem like the slightly deranged musings of one out-of-touch intellectual. Unhappily, its outlook cannot be so easily dismissed. Outlandish as it may be, the book represents a main line of Arab thinking, one that (as Fouad Ajami has noted in his recent book, *The Dream Palace of the Arabs*, which I reviewed in the March 1998 COMMENTARY) is embraced as well by any number of leading politicians, military officers, religious authorities, journalists, and academics. Moreover, the principal points made by Aburish—for example, that the Arab plight results from Western greed and hatred, or that the city of Jerusalem belongs exclusively to Muslims—enjoy great support on the Arab "street." Thus, although he may appear to inhabit a fringe, Saïd Aburish actually stands smack in the center.

And that is why his message needs to be taken seriously. It is true that the illusions of the 1950's and 60's, when vast numbers of Arabs thought they could gain world-straddling power through domestic socialism, alliance with the Soviet Union, and the destruction of Israel, have died away. But nostalgia for that period remains strong, and it is reinforced by a reluctance to take responsibility for one's own political destiny and by a widespread reliance on elaborate models of conspiracist thought.

Bernard Lewis, the great scholar of Middle Eastern history, has remarked that in the 1990's, "for the first time in centuries, the course of events in the Middle East is being shaped not by outside but by regional powers. . . . The choice, at last, is their own." That is true; but those who share Aburish's mentality—and their number is legion—perversely reply: no, thank you, we prefer to remain subject to the phantasm of Western imperialism. In polished and pleasant English prose, but without euphemism, *A Brutal Friendship* makes available to the world what many Arab Muslims are currently thinking, and thus removes one more excuse for Westerners to pretend otherwise.

Inside Out

Closed Chambers: The First Eyewitness Account of the Epic Struggles Inside the Supreme Court

by Edward Lazarus

Times Books. 576 pp. $27.50

Reviewed by
Dan Himmelfarb

NEARLY TWENTY years ago, the *Washington Post* reporters Bob Woodward and Scott Armstrong published *The Brethren*, "an account," according to the book's introduction, "of the inner workings of the Supreme Court from 1969 to 1976." That account was based on interviews with more than 200 anonymous sources, including Justices and law clerks, and upon unpublished documents, including internal Court memoranda and draft opinions that had likewise been made available to the authors by confidential sources.

Closed Chambers, which is about the inner workings of the Supreme Court in the 1980's and 1990's, is essentially a sequel to *The Brethren*. Like *The Brethren*, it relies, according to an author's note, upon "dozens of interviews" with people (presumably including law clerks) who spoke with the author "on the condition that [he] would not reveal their names" and upon "unpublished draft opinions and memoranda," only some of which are publicly available.

There is, however, an important difference between the two books. While the authors of *The Brethren* were journalists dependent on information provided to them by Supreme Court "insiders," the author of *Closed Chambers*, Edward Lazarus, is himself an insider:

DAN HIMMELFARB, *who has written for* COMMENTARY *about American conservatism, was a law clerk for Justice Clarence Thomas during the Supreme Court's 1992-93 term.*

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he was a law clerk for Justice Harry Blackmun (who has since retired) during the Supreme Court's 1988-89 term.

Like *The Brethren*, *Closed Chambers* has provoked controversy. This is so not only because Lazarus has arguably violated written rules, and has certainly violated unwritten ones, against the disclosure by former clerks of (in Lazarus's words) "the private decision-making of the Justices," but also because his book is so harshly critical of that decision-making process. For the main thesis of *Closed Chambers* is that Supreme Court Justices are hypocrites.

The thesis is stated most starkly in the book's first chapter:

> [The] image of the Court [that I carry with me] is of an institution broken into unyielding factions that have largely given up on a meaningful exchange of their respective views or, for that matter, a meaningful explication or defense of their own views. It is of Justices who in many important cases resort to transparently deceitful and hypocritical arguments and factual distortions as they discard judicial philosophy and consistent interpretation in favor of bottom-line results.

In support of this contention, Lazarus offers extended discussions of many of the leading death-penalty, civil-rights, and abortion cases decided by the Supreme Court during the 1980's and 1990's. For most of these cases, he describes how the Court reached its decision, taking the reader through the case from beginning to end—a path that includes the petitioning party's request for review, oral argument, the vote at the Justices' conference, the circulation of draft opinions, and the Court's announcement of its ruling. For most of these cases, too, Lazarus condemns both the result and the way it was reached. Indeed, hardly a chapter in *Closed Chambers* ends without charging that one or another decision was the product of unprincipled, intellectually dishonest, and politically motivated decision-making.

Though Lazarus is plainly a liberal, he does not hesitate in *Closed Chambers* to criticize liberal Justices. He has little patience, for example, for the "living Constitution" jurisprudence of the late Justices William Brennan and Thurgood Marshall, who held down the far-left flank of the Court when Lazarus was clerking. He recognizes that the position that the death penalty constitutes cruel and unusual punishment under all circumstances—the basis on which Brennan and Marshall dissented in every capital case—is, at bottom, nothing more than a political view masquerading as an interpretation of the Eighth Amendment. Lazarus also criticizes the reasoning (such as it is) in *Roe* v. *Wade*, the 1973 decision, written by his former boss, that recognized a constitutional right to an abortion—and that has been repeatedly reaffirmed by the Court during the last quarter-century.

Like many liberals who are critical of other liberals, however, Lazarus, apparently fearful that someone might mistake him for a conservative, is quick to assert that the Court's conservatives are at least as bad. While liberal Justices are unprincipled because they pretend that their political views have a basis in the Constitution, conservative Justices are unprincipled, according to Lazarus, because their votes and opinions belie their professed belief in a *distinction* between politics and constitutional law. In support of this claim of conservative hypocrisy, Lazarus points out that, in voting to invalidate affirmative-action plans, Chief Justice William Rehnquist has abandoned his usual practice of deferring to state and local legislatures, while Justice Antonin Scalia, rather than seeking to discover the "original meaning" of the constitutional provision at issue, has appealed to general principles of "morality."

But while Lazarus claims to believe that liberals and conservatives are equally at fault for turning the Supreme Court into a political institution, he is unable to disguise the fact that most of his hostility is directed at conservatives. When the Senate rejected the nomination of Robert Bork, for example, Lazarus says that he "rejoiced"; ten years later, he is "still glad Bork lost." Indeed, Lazarus is confident that "Bork would have been an intemperate and partisan Justice, arrogant about a judicial philosophy he only selectively practiced and could not effectively defend."

Such venomous language appears nowhere else in Lazarus's descriptions of individual Justices (or would-be Justices). To Lazarus, Bork, who believes that federal judges should generally defer to the democratically elected branches of government, is "intemperate" and "arrogant," but Justice Brennan, who believed that his political views should have the force of constitutional law, was merely "partisan." As

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for Justice Blackmun, who inserted a right to an abortion into the Constitution (no one, including him, is exactly sure where), far from being "intemperate" or "arrogant," he "has been the most empathetic Justice in recent times, and very likely in the history of the Court."

IS THERE anything to Lazarus's charge that Justices routinely engage in politically motivated decision-making? It is hardly an example of original thinking to say, as Lazarus does, that judges are constantly tempted to substitute their political views for the task of interpreting the Constitution, and that many judges are unable—if they even try—to resist the temptation. But Lazarus is quite wrong to say that conservatives are as blameworthy as liberals—and wronger still to suggest that conservatives are *more* blameworthy. The contrary is true.

The conservative approach to constitutional interpretation is premised, as Lazarus recognizes, on the distinction between law and politics, and on the need for judges to disregard their political views when passing upon constitutional challenges to legislative enactments. Conservative Justices who render a decision motivated by conservative politics are therefore departing in a fundamental way from a jurisprudence that is inherently apolitical.

The liberal approach to constitutional interpretation, by contrast, particularly in its more extreme versions (which, it should be noted, are rarely employed on the current Supreme Court), is, by its very nature, essentially indistinguishable from political liberalism. When liberal Justices render a decision that is motivated by what can only be characterized as liberal politics—when, for example, they conclude that a legislative enactment is unconstitutional on the basis of "evolving standards of decency," a generalized "right to privacy," or a conviction that a particular practice "shocks the conscience"—they are being faithful to a jurisprudence that is inherently political. That is why the method of constitutional interpretation employed by liberal Justices almost invariably—one might even say necessarily—leads to decisions that are politically liberal, while the method of constitutional interpretation employed by conservative Justices leads to decisions that politically may fall one way or another.

Edward Lazarus is to be commended for writing a book that decries the politicization of the judiciary. But he is either unable to see or too fainthearted to acknowledge that it is his fellow liberals who are principally responsible for this unfortunate state of affairs. This intellectual failing is at least as disturbing as the moral failing reflected in Lazarus's brazen disclosure of Court confidences.

Prime Mover

Acheson: The Secretary of State Who Created the American World
by James Chace
Simon & Schuster. 512 pp. $30.00

Reviewed by
Patrick Glynn

"HISTORY WILL deal severely with the Prime Minister," Winston Churchill once warned then-Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin on the floor of the House of Commons. "I know, because I shall write it."

Like Churchill, Dean Acheson wrote the history of his own era—dramatic years in the State Department under Franklin D. Roosevelt and later under Harry Truman. His magnificent 1969 memoir, *Present at the Creation*, made the best-seller lists and won a Pulitzer prize. But it also seems to have scared off serious biographers, who dared not attempt a tale already told so well. As a result, we have long been without a comprehensive life of one of America's most important statesmen, arguably the major architect of the post-World War II order.

The time is therefore ripe for James Chace's authoritative and highly readable biography. Acheson is a recent enough figure that many who knew him remain alive, and Chace, a professor at Bard College and the editor of *World Policy Journal*, has been able to draw on personal conversations with his subject's contemporaries and children. The opening of archives in both Washington and Moscow has also served Chace well, giving him the advantage of near-perfect hindsight. The result is not only a superb policy biography but also a three-dimensional portrait of the man.

DEAN ACHESON—tall, slim, debonair, with a carefully cropped guardsman mustache—was a Secretary of State right out of central casting. His cutting wit only added to his stature. "Adlai [Stevenson] has a third-rate mind which he can't make up," Acheson once quipped impatiently of the twice-unsuccessful Democratic candidate for President. Acheson "was said not to suffer fools gladly," writes Chace; "in fact, he suffered them scarcely at all."

Acheson was part of the *crème* of an extraordinary generation. He learned law at the knees of Felix Frankfurter, Louis D. Brandeis, and Oliver Wendell Holmes. Later he walked among titans—Roosevelt, Truman, Churchill, Adenauer, de Gaulle. He and his colleagues in government—men like John J. McCloy, Robert Lovett, and Averell Harriman—managed to combine rough-and-ready American tough-

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ness with gentlemanly qualities as they grappled with the new and unfamiliar international danger posed by the Soviet Union.

Apart from Acheson's major achievements—a role as prime mover in the creation of the Marshall Plan, the Truman doctrine, and the NATO alliance, as well as a major part in the Bretton Woods accords, to name only the highlights—his great contribution to American foreign policy was the introduction of strategic realism. He was perhaps the first American Secretary of State in over a generation to think and act coherently in terms of U.S. interests and the first to conceive of those interests in truly global terms.

As Chace emphasizes throughout, Acheson was at heart a "pragmatist," with a lawyerly mind that evaluated situations on a case-by-case basis, though usually in light of some larger strategic intuition. From his stern father—a low-church Episcopal rector, later bishop of Connecticut—he inherited both strong ethics and a distaste for abstract speculation. His conversations as a young Supreme Court law clerk with Brandeis and the venerable Holmes, whom Acheson worshiped unabashedly, reinforced this intellectual tendency. "General principles do not decide concrete cases," Holmes, the consummate common-law judge, had said, in a remark Acheson was fond of quoting.

Acheson's allergy to ideology cut two ways. On the one hand, he categorically rejected the New Dealers' Wilsonian vision of the international future: the dream of a world, as Roosevelt put it, without "spheres of influence" or power politics. This was, in Acheson's view, "a grand fallacy." The United Nations Charter was "impracticable," and the world body was hardly to be regarded as a venue for serious international decision-making. "The ass that went to Mecca remained an ass, and a policy has little added to it by its place of utterance," was Acheson's rebuke to idealistic UN advocates.

On the other hand, unmoved as he was by abstract ideas, Acheson was initially slow to recognize how ideology might shape the calculations of others—particularly the USSR under Stalin. Among top foreign-policy officials in the Truman administration, he was apparently the last convert to the hard line toward the Soviet Union that took shape during the pivotal year of 1946. Once he became convinced of Soviet intransigence and expansionism, however, he became the hard line's strongest advocate, though he differed from many, especially Republicans, in continuing to assess the issue more through the lens of traditional great-power politics than in terms of ideological struggle.

Despite his reluctance to enter into moralistic crusades, Acheson understood the frequent need to justify American policy in broad, sometimes sweeping, anti-Communist terms. A strength that set him apart from many of his peers in the establishment, then and since, was an instinctive feel for the mind of the ordinary American. This he had acquired in part through a youthful rebellion against the "idle rich" that once led him to take a position on a railway work crew. His comfort with people far from the drawing-room milieu may even have helped cement his special relationship with Harry Truman—an ordinary American if ever there was one—toward whom Acheson bore unstinting loyalty and affection. As Chace stresses repeatedly, this unusually strong relationship between a President and Secretary of State was one key to Acheson's success.

Another key was Acheson's ability to keep the big picture in view, subordinating secondary matters and emotional attachments to the main theme: filling the power vacu-

Once upon a time, there was a young man named Ken who collected books. Soon, there were so many books, and so little room, that he realized he had to become a bookdealer and move to bigger digs.

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um in postwar Europe. In this connection, despite strong cultural and familial ties to the British Isles, he set no store by the much-touted "special relationship" between London and Washington. Indeed, he viewed the British mixture of weakness and wounded post-imperial vanity with deep distrust, seeing it as an impediment to what needed to be done in Europe as a whole.

The same unsentimental approach led him, while serving as Under Secretary to then-Secretary of State George Marshall, to oppose the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. (Anti-Semitism was never an issue. Acheson's closest friend and mentor in Washington was Frankfurter, though during this period they mutually agreed to swear off the subject of Zionism in their daily conversations.) Acheson and Marshall believed Israeli statehood would lead to war and thus undermine the U.S. position in the Middle East. Truman, recognizing a larger imperative, overruled them. On similar grounds, in later years, Acheson campaigned hard in favor of continued Portuguese colonial rule in southern Africa, defying the liberal anti-imperialism of his fellow Democrats.

THESE CHOICES reveal a certain blind spot in the Achesonian model. It would be inaccurate, and wholly unfair, to say that his approach lacked vision. But there was a kind of absence of faith—a lack of sensitivity to the large moral undercurrents that played such a conspicuous role in the cold war and were to come to a kind of apotheosis during the conflict's endgame in the Reagan years. Though Reagan was himself a consummate realist about power, he grasped better than Acheson that ideas of right and wrong carry real force in human affairs, and can be transformative in a way that realism rarely is.

The most serious contemporary criticism of the Truman-Acheson policy toward the USSR was that it tended toward stalemate. Even if one acknowledges the elements of hypocrisy and demagoguery in John Foster Dulles's bold notions of "liberation" and "rollback," the Republican Dulles, later to become Secretary of State himself in the Eisenhower administration, was right to sense in his Democratic rival's approach a certain lack of moral dynamism. At the time, the loss of strategic initiative was vividly reflected in the deadlock of the Korean war, still grinding on when Truman and Acheson left office.

Acheson's bitterest political enemy in his day was not Dulles, however, but Senator Joseph McCarthy, who, with his charges about Communists running loose in the State Department, helped to make Acheson's final years as Secretary something of a living hell. Acheson suffered particularly dearly for his public refusal to repudiate the Soviet spy Alger Hiss upon the latter's conviction for perjury in 1950. Doubting the man's innocence, Acheson nonetheless refused to set aside long-standing personal loyalties to Hiss and his family. Whatever threat espionage posed, moreover, unleashing McCarthy on the State Department, Acheson was convinced, would eviscerate America's capacity to make foreign policy and destroy the morale of its diplomatic corps. In this he was undoubtedly correct.

CHACE'S NARRATIVE, though very admiring, is not entirely uncritical. Still, his policy judgments generally follow those of the liberal establishment and, mostly, Acheson's own, even when questionable. It is hard, for example, to accept Chace's lenient verdict on the quixotic 1946 Acheson-Lilienthal plan to turn over control of nuclear weapons and technology to an international authority (though in the end the proposal came to nothing). It is harder still to second Acheson's, and Chace's, view that by consigning Chiang Kai-shek and Taiwan to the tender mercies of the Communist Chinese, we could have opened a productive relationship with Mao.

By contrast, Chace's views of the Soviet problem—mirroring Acheson's—are generally without illusion. And, true to the biographer's art, he makes his judgments with a light hand, giving the reader all the evidence needed to make a determination of his own. As we are once again "present at the creation" of a new world order, the valuable history lesson offered by this book could not be more timely. And, in an era of the rankest national scandals, reflection on Acheson's career offers an additional benefit as well: a welcome breath of honorable air.

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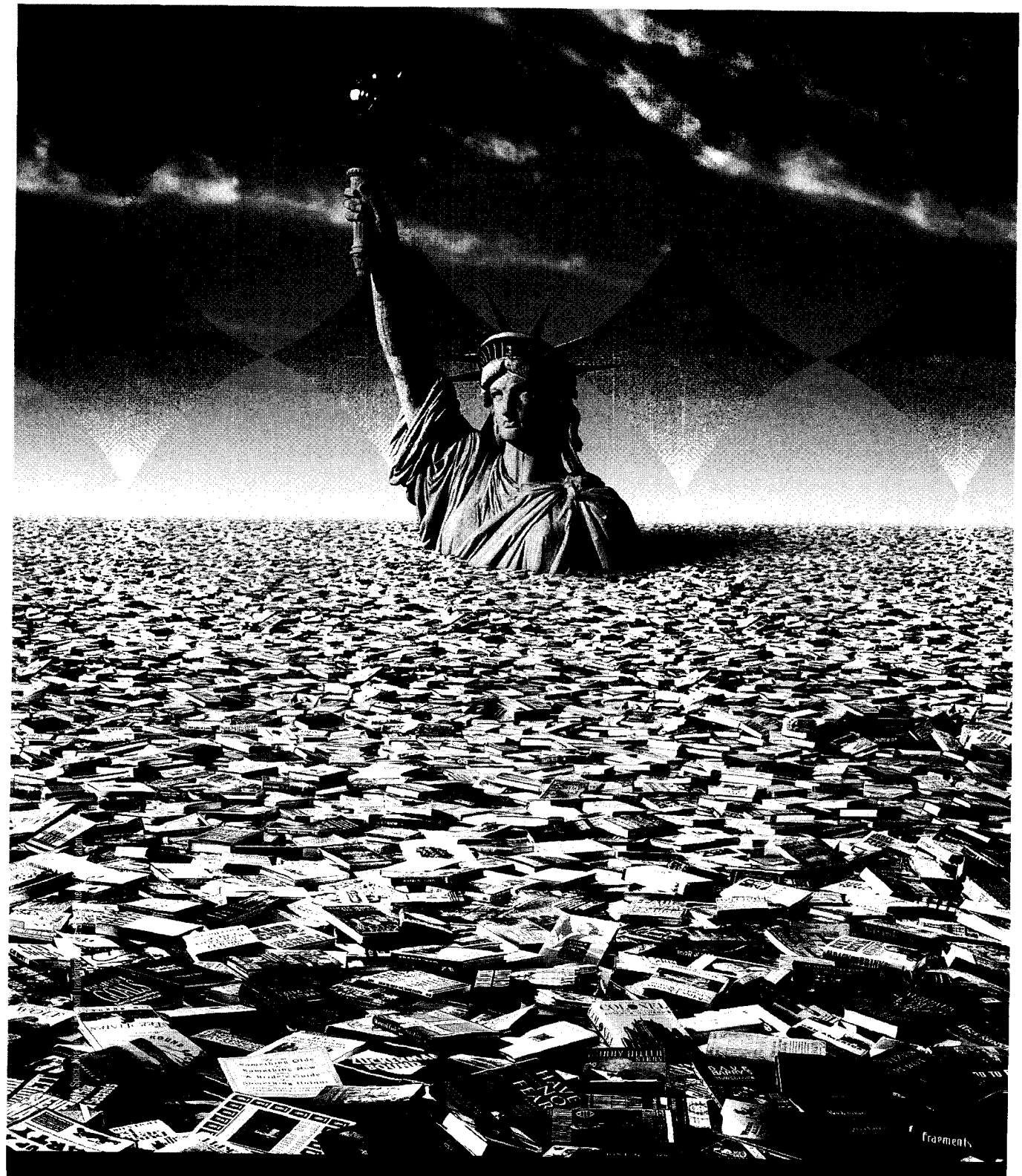

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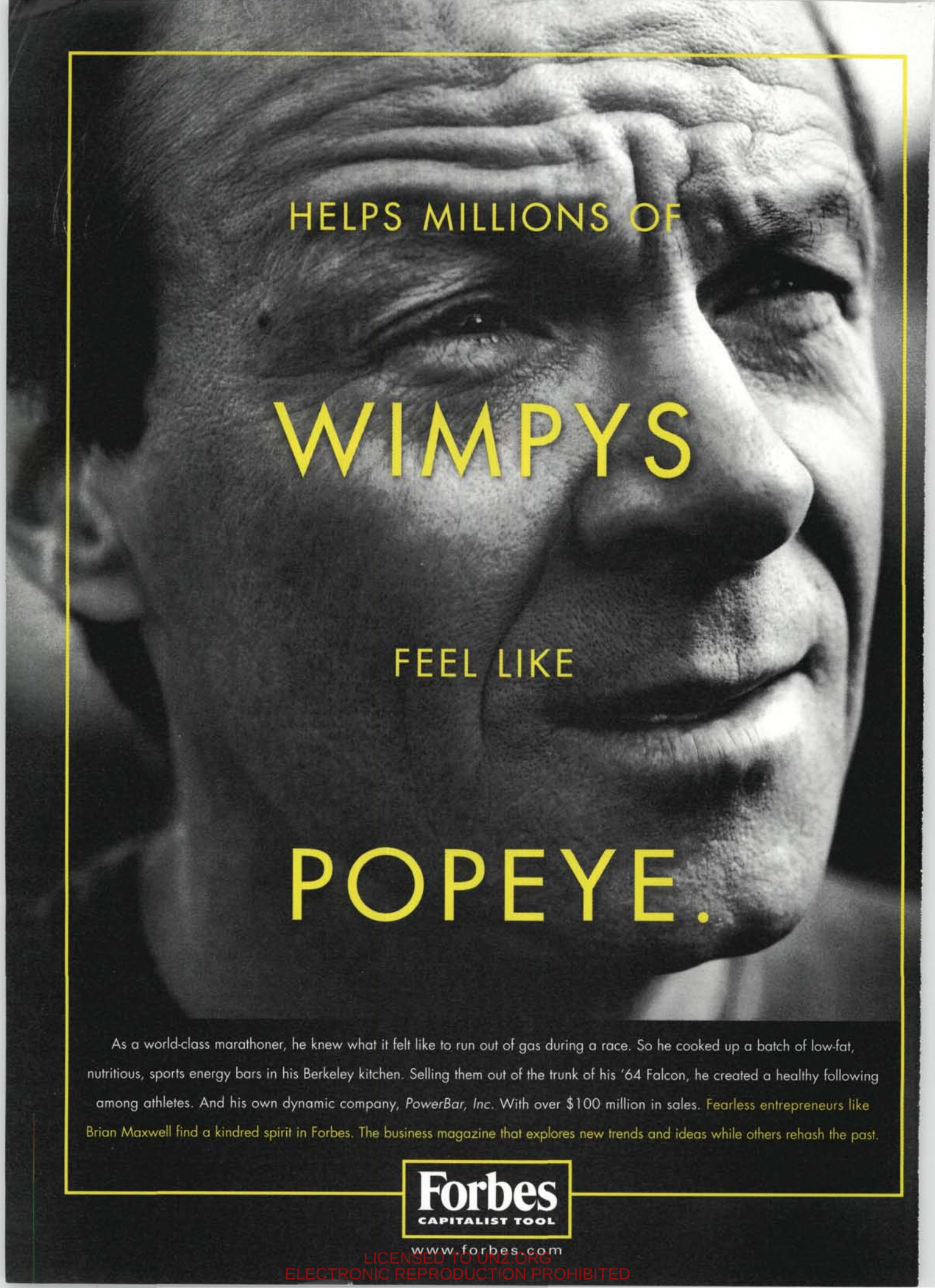

As a world-class marathoner, he knew what it felt like to run out of gas during a race. So he cooked up a batch of low-fat, nutritious, sports energy bars in his Berkeley kitchen. Selling them out of the trunk of his '64 Falcon, he created a healthy following among athletes. And his own dynamic company, *PowerBar, Inc.* With over $100 million in sales. Fearless entrepreneurs like Brian Maxwell find a kindred spirit in Forbes. The business magazine that explores new trends and ideas while others rehash the past.

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